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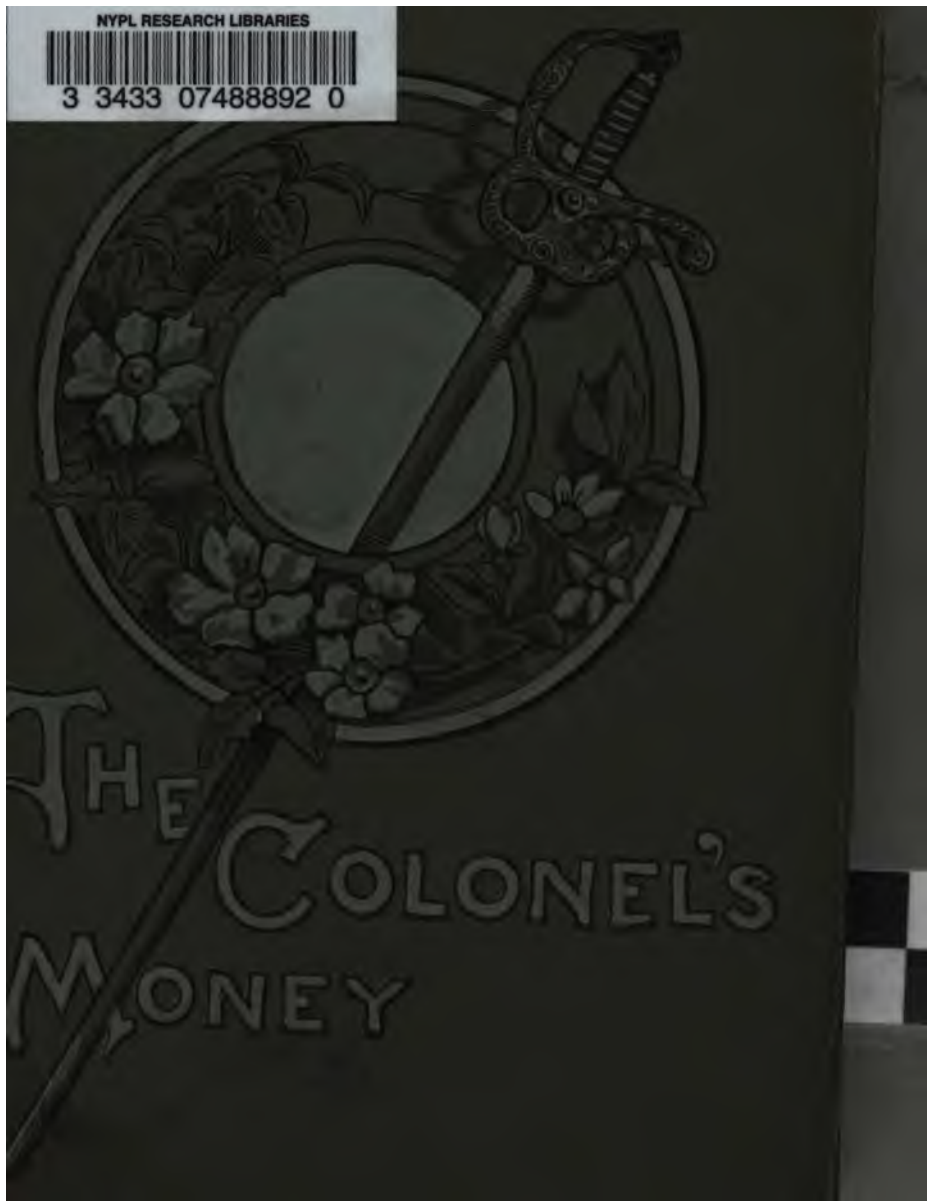
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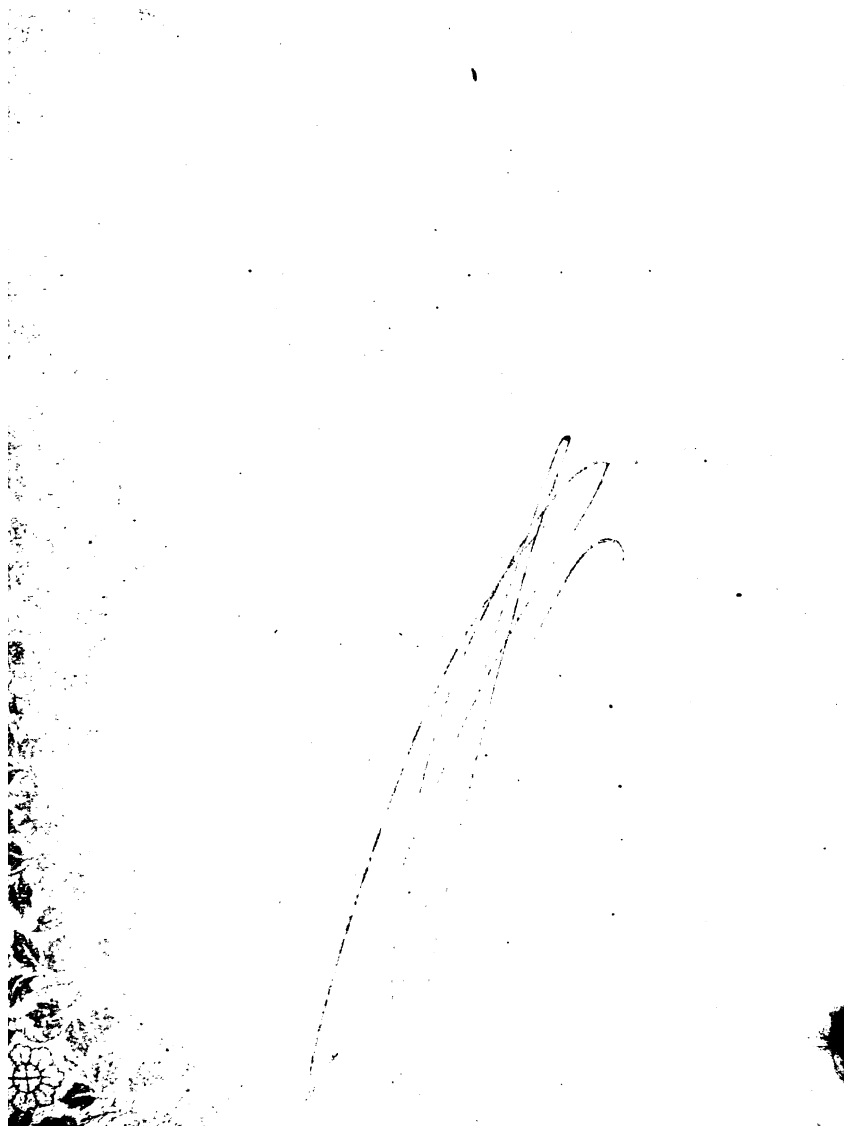
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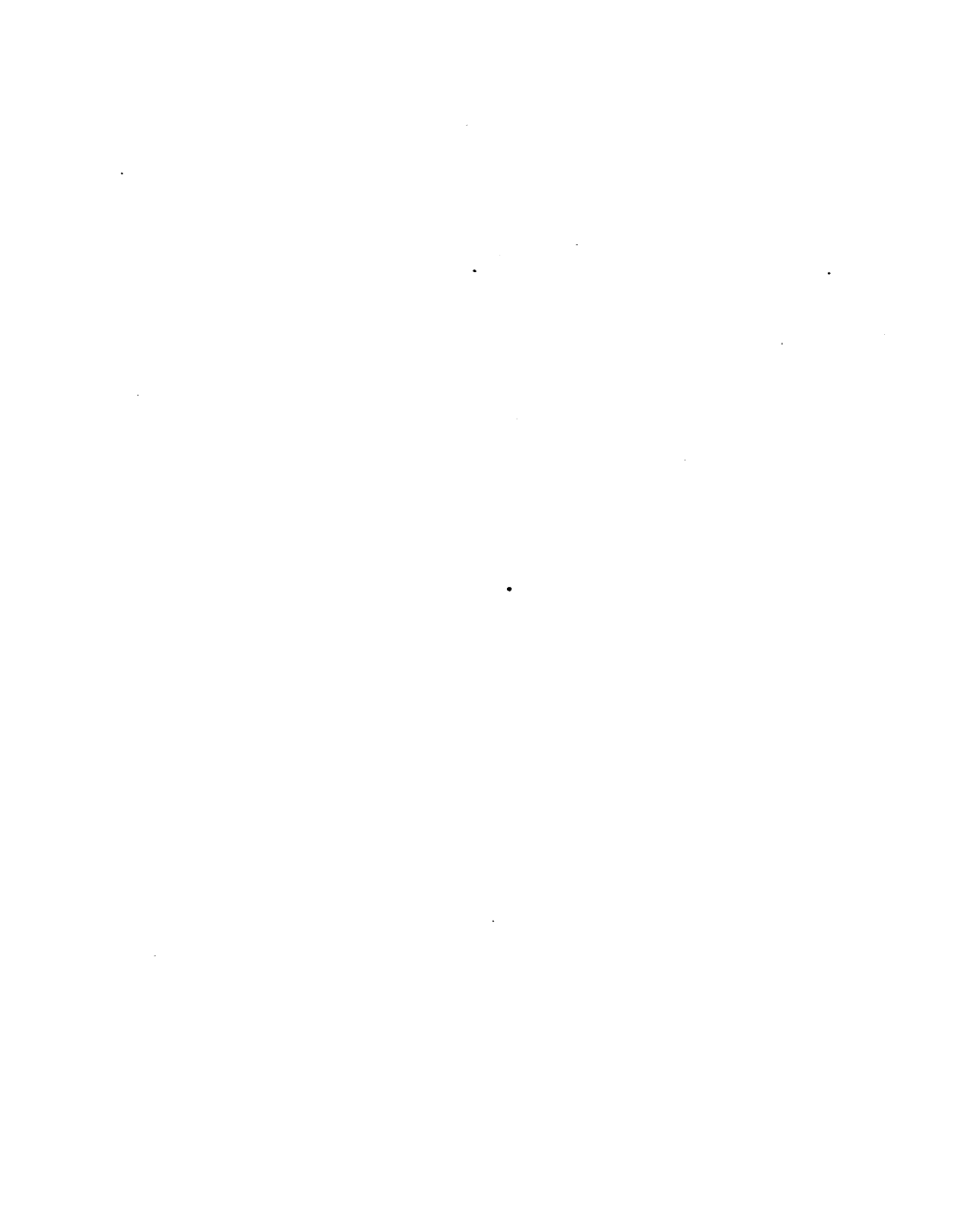




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HERE SIGNS OF THE CHASE BECAME MORE EXCITING.

[page 181.]

THE COLONEL'S MONEY

BY LUCY C. LILLIE

AUTHOR OF

CC "JO'S OPPORTUNITY" "MILDRED'S BARGAIN"
"ROLFE HOUSE" "NAN" ETC.

Illustrated

NEW YORK

HARPER & BROTHERS, FRANKLIN SQUARE

1888

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MY FRIENDS M. V. AND A. P.
In Remembrance
OF KINDLY ENGLISH DAYS

November, 1887

44X505



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THE COLONEL'S MONEY.

CHAPTER I.

"FORTUNE'S WINDOW."

"COME along, Gladys; we'll be late for the class. It is after three now."

"I know," pleaded Gladys. Fortune & Miles's window was a daily distraction, and now it was doubly fascinating, having an array of boxes artistically grouped containing sticks of colored sealing-wax, with a separate compartment for wax-candles and a steel-finished seal. Gladys had no correspondents in particular, but she longed to possess one of the boxes, and to stamp a fine "F," for Ferrol, on a nicely dropped round of the blue or the bronze wax.

"Come—do," reiterated her companion, a tall, pretty-looking girl of fifteen, very neatly and primly dressed in a tailor-made costume, faultless in style, from the narrow blue braid finish to the close rows of buttons, and well completed by her soft toque of blue cloth and the dark tan-colored gloves. Gladys was dressed almost shabbily, though with evident satisfaction in certain touches like her companion's. She wore an exact reproduction of the toque in brown, which



was very becoming above her soft rings of reddish-brown hair, and her gloves were tan-colored, though decidedly the worse for long wear, but her dress was a home-made affair, which lost its claim to appropriateness or beauty in being over-trimmed and befurbelowed. Looking at the girl's frank face, with the pretty dark gray eyes shaded by almost black lashes, the healthful pink-and-white of the complexion showing in this August weather a becoming dash of brown, one might wish that Gladys Ferrol could be simply and childishly dressed for once as became her fourteen years and her simple childish good looks; but, as nearly any one in Harringford could have told you, the Ferrols had gone near to "spoiling" their little cousin Gladys; that is, spoiling her so far as letting her have her own way and indulge her own fancies was concerned, for indulgence where money was needed was out of the question. The Ferrols, in spite of keeping the old homestead and living fairly comfortably, had no money for anything luxurious. Even a box of the fascinating wax would be quite beyond her ambition, Gladys well understood, although her companion and most intimate friend, Mollie Hildreth, might have bought out Fortune & Miles's entire stock, without missing the money spent from her regular allowance.

"Why do you care about that wax?" said Mollie, carelessly. To contrive a present of it to Gladys never occurred to her, and she was too accustomed to her friend's impulsive fancies to think of this one at all seriously. "Come; mademoiselle will begin with a scolding. Let us concoct a sen-



tence for her," continued Mollie, putting her hand on Gladys's arm and leading her rather reluctantly away. "Il ne faut pas nous *gronder*," she said, dubiously, and yet a little proud of her French.

"What is *gronder*?" queried Gladys. She had recovered from her passing desire for the wax so far as to enter gayly into anything her beloved friend might have to say or suggest.

"*Gronder* is to scold," explained Mollie, very much pleased. "Don't hit me with your parasol, please, my love. There! she is in the window, and I suppose all the girls are there. Come; hurry. I shall have to say you would stop at Fortune's window."

"Very well," assented Gladys. They had turned the corner of the street, and were approaching the little vine-embowered house in which the French teacher, Mademoiselle Delorne, lived. Gladys smiled oddly. "How funny that sounded, Mollie!" she said, looking up at the other. "Fortune's window! If we could stop really at such a place, I wonder what we would choose out of it?"

Mollie returned her friend's glance with a mixture of perplexity and admiration. Of course she knew that Gladys Ferrol was decidedly the "brightest" girl in town, and full of queer romantic notions, but she was always a little startled by her original way of taking things, and now she hardly understood *quite* what Gladys meant. "Fortune's window," she repeated, opening mademoiselle's little gate. "Well, I guess we'd all find we wanted *something* or other,

if we had the chance, although I don't know quite what I'd say."

"Oh, *you!*" cried Gladys. No wonder Mollie Hildreth could not be sure what she would want from fate or fortune, being apparently so well supplied with all that life and nature and the world could bestow; but it was very different with herself. Gladys could have rattled off a whole list of "wants," not only for herself but many others, beginning with comforts for her aunt Sarah's sick-room, down to new cretonne covers for the homestead parlor. If everybody in Harringford did think the Ferrols' place perfectly delightful, with its quaint air of old-fashioned dignity, cosiness, and elegance combined, the dwellers in the white frame-and-brick mansion knew its discrepancies, and just what they most desired to see repaired or improved, so that a free demand on "Fortune's window" would have been promptly enough responded to by little Gladys, had such been possible. But this was not a fairy-tale world. No genie of the lamp appears now to answer limitless requests from Aladdins, and Gladys Ferrol was only one of numberless little American maidens who have to look forward to "doing something" for themselves sooner or later—the something in her case being, as she well knew, to teach as soon as she could be fitted for it. But that would be years off, anyway, and there seemed to her now plenty of time for French, music, and a goodly number of "ologies," to be acquired before the dreaded period of imparting such knowledge came. Meanwhile, if not in every sense free from the re-



straints of very limited means, life was very pleasant and happy and careless to the little girl, about whom so much of care and tenderness had always circled that no future seemed to her at all to be dreaded.

Gladys lived very much in a world of her own, it must be confessed—a strange, romantic, rose-colored world, built up of her secret ambitions to be one day a famous writer ; and the fact that her castle-building went on in the midst of a healthy life of fun and frolic, in some ways too childish for her years, was, had she but known it, the most wholesome and fortunate of all conditions. She carried her dearly beloved heroes and heroines—her Lady Arabellas and Lord Alphonses, or her Massachusetts mill-girls and brave fishing people—about with her in a cosey corner of her brain, no matter what other occupation or diversion might be absorbing her externally, and she mingled the heroic or tragic deeds of their imaginary lives so constantly with the prosaic ones of her own that they grew to be as real to her as the people among whom she lived.

Gladys had lately been thinking seriously of writing a real story and showing it to her aunt Sarah or Cousin Bert. She was sure of their sympathy in everything she did, which was, after all, the greatest comfort of her life. But the least of the summer days were too crowded with out-of-door fun and frolicking to give her time for so serious a work, and Gladys decided to wait until after the cold weather set in, when there would be the always idle hour between school and tea-time—just suited to a literary employment of importance.

CHAPTER II.

STARTLING NEWS.

THE French class at Mademoiselle Delorne's consisted of five young people in Gladys's "set" — girls between twelve and sixteen, whose interests were all sufficiently in common to make their every meeting an opportunity for a great deal of chatter, and in spite of mademoiselle's strict ideas about time and hard work, they contrived to exchange various bits of news or gossip or talk as they sat about the square table in her little parlor. Gladys, usually having a great many items ready to dance off the end of her tongue, certain always of interested auditors, was inclined to feel a contempt for the long, thin grammar mademoiselle employed. Gladys kept hers near to her face, clasped in both hands, and yet held so that her merry eyes roved easily over the top, and took in whatever was going on or passing by in the street outside the window nearest which she always sat.

To-day silence or the French verbs and *dicté* were peculiarly intolerable. Her cousin Bert had agreed upon a "straw-ride" the following evening, when the moon would be at its fullest, and had commissioned Gladys to invite the French class; so that how was it possible to conjugate so cross-grained

a verb as "to suffer" with this piece of information held in suspense, unless indeed one used it as an expression of one's own feelings? Most of the girls seemed to be infected by Gladys's spirit of rebellion, and yawned over their recitation, and found the task of hunting up words in the dictionary very nearly impossible. That something was on Gladys's mind every one knew, and they guessed or hoped for a pleasant surprise; so it was a relief when, after a quick, rather nervous click of the gate, and knock on the little front door, mademoiselle was summoned out of the room to see a visitor.

"There!" exclaimed Bell Lyman, whose blue eyes had been fairly glued to Gladys's face for ten minutes; "do *say* what you're thinking about, Gladys. I know you've something to tell us."

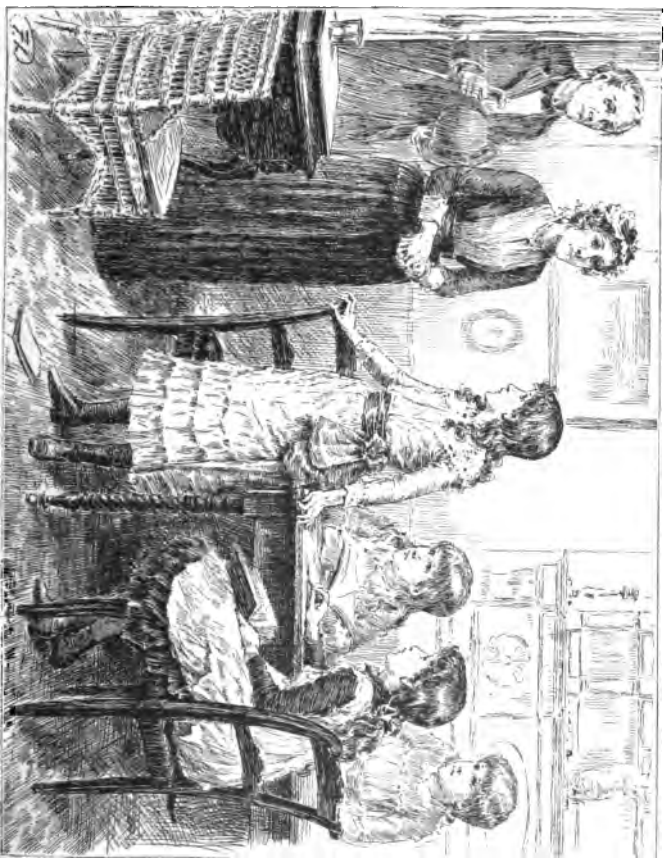
"Well, I have," assented Gladys, with great glee. "Cousin Bert says he'll give us all a straw-ride to-morrow night over to Peter's Cove. We're to take some refreshments, and get coffee and lemonade there at the farm. Can you all come?"

A joyful chorus of assents went up. Mr. Bert Ferrol was well known as a delightful charioteer and host on all occasions: a kindly little middle-aged gentleman, whose chief interest in life seemed to be organizing deeds of charity or courtesy, in which all the profit and amusement fell to others and the hard labor to himself; but perhaps he had his satisfaction in the universal affection bestowed upon him by his towns-people. His compensation came unquestionably

from the results of his kindly or benevolent endeavors. So successful were all his enterprises that people wondered more and more why, as a business man, he had never seemed to "get on." An unsuccessful career as a lawyer had at last drifted him into real estate and agriculture; but, as I have told you, besides the homestead he had very little to depend upon, and yet out of the small income an invalid mother had to be cared for, his sister Lois to be supported, and the little cousin Gladys educated, as well as taken care of. Yet apparently not a shadow of care rested on Mr. Ferrol's kind countenance, with its innumerable puckers and creases, all the result of laughing, one would think; and not a young person in Harringford but would rather have spent a holiday in his company than in that of any one else, so genial, kind, and sympathetic was he by nature and in manner. Gladys was envied her relationship and the close companionship of home life with so delightful a cousin, and the little girl appreciated her privileges to their fullest extent. Cousin Bert was her oracle, her counsellor, her pride, and her admiration; and if the good man rose to any heights of money-making ambition, it was assuredly for his little cousin's sake.

"I should say we will accept," said Mollie Hildreth, fairly radiant. "How long is it since Mr. Ferrol gave us a straw-ride? I never shall forget the last one. Who else is going, Gladys?—any of the boys?"

"Oh," said Gladys, with a little grimace, "I suppose we'll ask two or three of them. They're useful old things, you know, sometimes."



"MADEMOISELLE, WHAT IS THE MATTER?" ASKED GLADYS.



"Decidedly, especially George Sloane."

"Do you suppose he'll condescend to sit upon straw?" laughed Bell Lyman.

George belonged to a military school, and had lately shown such exclusive and aristocratic tendencies that the girls in Harringford began to feel that he needed a severe snubbing of some sort.

"We'll let him try it cautiously," answered Gladys. "I mean to take a piece of straw and do it up carefully, and send it to him as a sample of what he may expect."

The girls were all laughing as much over the suggestion of George's disgust at such a proceeding as at Gladys's funny manner, when suddenly the door opened. Mademoiselle appeared, her dark face pale and startled in expression. She evidently passed over the fact of the very English-sounding conversation going on, although her eyes sought Gladys's slim, upright figure and merry face eagerly and curiously. Something had happened, for there just behind her in the passage-way stood no less a person than Mr. Ferrol. He too peered into the room, and looked at Gladys with an air of uncertainty, and yet evident impressiveness.

"Cousin Bert!" exclaimed his little cousin, starting up, and letting the thin green grammar fall to the ground. "Mademoiselle, what is the matter? Is any one—sick? or what is it?"

"No one is sick," Mr. Ferrol said, now hurrying forward. His kind heart took quick alarm at the chance of Gladys being frightened. "No one is—sick, but— Yes, something

is the matter, Gladys dear; and mademoiselle and the girls must excuse you, if you please. Will you put your things on and come with me?"

Gladys's fingers shook, but she obeyed him, while the girls stood about, trying to help her, and yet rather hindering her progress; for, as they said afterwards, they had never seen Mr. Ferrol look so agitated. Although no one guessed at the real cause, every one knew it must be something decidedly unexpected and startling.

The brown jacket and the toque, even the tan-colored gloves, were on at last. Gladys uttered her good-bys, and was swept away by little Mr. Ferrol, who nodded to them all in a preoccupied fashion.

"What in the world is it, mademoiselle?" cried Mollie Hildreth. "Did he tell you?"

Mademoiselle sank into a chair and gazed at her pupils, unable for an instant to speak. Then she said, in a solemn voice, as though imparting some tragic information,

"My dear girls, what do you think? Our little Gladys has come into an *estate*—a heritage—in England. The lawyer is at the homestead now. What a wonderful thing is life!"

CHAPTER III.

COLONEL DYMOND'S WILL.

IF Mademoiselle Delorne's class were fairly paralyzed, as Mollie Hildreth expressed it, by the news of their young friend's fortune, you may readily imagine that Gladys herself was in a condition of wild excitement as she walked along by Mr. Ferrol's side, listening to his fluent explanations of what had happened, and yet thrown into such a state of mind that she only half comprehended details, and heard and saw everything in a sort of confusion, out of which two or three striking and important facts loomed before her, and only grew distinct as she neared the gate-way of home.

What Mr. Ferrol was trying to call to her mind was the visit of her mother's English great-uncle to America and Haringford when she was five years old; his great pleasure upon finding that she, Gladys, had been named after his mother, and talked of "doing something one of these days" for the little girl. But "one of these days" is a very vague way of promising anything; and when Gladys had been left a lonely little orphan, and brought to the homestead, no one had thought of the English gentleman and his enthusiastic interest of five years previous.

As Mr. Ferrol, with much dignity, had said half an hour

before to his English guest, "It's not the American way. We don't think of hunting up our rich relations, or our godfathers, or people like that, you see, when we're in need of assistance, though I believe it's different in your country." The English gentleman, who was a lawyer, had laughed, and said he thought "godfathers very useful people sometimes." At all events, the fact that old Colonel Dymond *had* remembered his promise was clear enough now. He had died leaving his little American kinswoman the bulk of his property, which, as it was not entailed, was in his own power to dispose of; and while the lawyer, Mr. Melrose, admitted that all "the family" were greatly astonished, and no doubt disappointed, there was no getting over the fact of its all being regular and legal, and now there only remained to be proven Gladys Ferrol's compliance with the conditions of her great-uncle's will. She was to go to England at once, and to remain under the appointed guardianship for the next four years, a special promise being that she was to be considered of age at eighteen, and to have full control of everything after that. The guardian was a certain Captain Paget, now absent on military duty in Afghanistan, but he had accepted the trust and written full instructions. The lawyer, Mr. Melrose, had chanced to be going on special business to America, and could see his little ward and bring her back with him. It was Captain Paget's wish that, until his return the following June, Gladys should remain under the care of his aunt, the "Honorable" Miss Dymond, of Devonshire.

If Mr. Ferrol had felt impatient and a trifle jealous over the business-like and "taken-for-granted" sort of precision with which all these arrangements had been made for his darling Gladys, he tried to bear in mind the fact that a competency was being secured to her; and after all, at her age, a few years must pass swiftly, and even if she had to make her home in England, the period of exile would be over; it need after that be only regarded as a headquarters. But in any case there was too much excitement over the mere fact of the inheritance itself to admit of any personal feelings or sentiments. Mr. Ferrol had left his sister sitting in the parlor trying to entertain their visitor, but her very voice betrayed the agitation she was in, and her whole manner showed her effort at self-control and repressed excitement. Miss Lois listened to the lawyer's calm, even tones, to his technical sort of explanations, his talk of this, that, and the other connected with the property, but it was all floating about her mind in a most unreal and confused sort of way—a guardian, Afghanistan, an "Honorable" Miss Somebody, funds, bonds, etc., etc., falling upon the air, and, as it were, startling the American atmosphere of the homestead parlor, and giving its gentle mistress a sort of shock in the midst of her decided gratification.

"There is very little family real estate," Mr. Melrose explained. "You see, Mr. Dymond always had his lodgings when in town, and if he went anywhere as to a home, it was to his cousin's. Just before his death he purchased a place in Devonshire, and of course when Miss Ferrol comes of

age there will be money enough for her to suit herself in that respect."

Miss Ferrol! He meant their little Gladys, of course; but how strange, thought Miss Lois, to hear her spoken of in this formal, dignified fashion! Somehow it seemed to define the child's new position, or to set an emphasis on her newly acquired rights. Miss Lois had done a great deal of reading in her day, chiefly under Mr. Bert's surveillance, and she was as well acquainted with English ways and manners as any one could be who had never been abroad, and only known half a dozen foreigners in all her existence; still, it seemed to her to take little Gladys directly out of life at the homestead to hear her spoken of in this manner, and her first shock and pang on the coming separation were gone through with in that moment. There could never again, so it seemed to Miss Lois, be any doubt as to Gladys's elevation to the rank of an heiress—her undisputed right to something which had a distinctly royal sort of flavor to Miss Lois. The fact, which in England would have been so promptly recognized, that no matter what Gladys's new future, she herself, Lois, must always be considered "*Miss Ferrol*," did not occur to her. On the contrary, there was in the little old maiden lady's mind a certain proud satisfaction in giving her young cousin the precedence. The English fortune had certainly not come to Gladys with a title. It had been left to her simply from the whims of a rather eccentric old man, and really for reasons which perhaps only his lawyer—the head of the firm of Melrose & Melrose—

knew ; but Miss Lois felt that something decidedly dignified had been added to the child's name, some title conferred, when she nodded and smiled at the young Englishman, and accepted his calling Gladys "Miss Ferrol." And at that moment the parlor door was opened, and the newly made heiress came into the room.

CHAPTER IV.

THE HOMESTEAD.

GLADYS might not have been fully aware of it, but as she followed her cousin into the parlor that memorable August afternoon a sudden rush of feeling, of loneliness, of dread of leaving all these dear surroundings, overpowered her. As she shyly extended her hand to the English visitor, and lifted a pair of eager, dark-gray eyes to his face, there was a sort of buzzing in her ears, and familiar objects were dancing before her eyes ; but she came back to realities at the sound of Miss Lois's voice.

"My dear," the little lady was saying, and Gladys knew that she was looking at her anxiously, "this is Mr. Melrose—or I ought to have put it the other way," she added, laughing rather nervously—"Mr. Melrose, this is my little cousin Gladys."

The lawyer understood Miss Lois's confusion readily enough, and moreover he was just then only anxious to see what kind of a young person Colonel Dymond's heiress might be. The tall, bright girl looking at him with this half-shy, half-eager, and questioning gaze pleased the Englishman thoroughly, and as he took her hand in his, a mental

reflection that things were not so bad after all made his smile very agreeable, if a trifle patronizing. He was a bright-faced, cheery-voiced gentleman, and in the first glance Gladys decided she would like him; but while they were all talking together, a few minutes later, Gladys's eyes wandered away from the stranger, and shot a swift, tender, regretful glance at Cousin Bert's figure—at his honest, plain face, upon which the most pitiable expression had settled down—and all her satisfaction was dashed. She would not have trusted herself to speak for anything; as it was, she only managed to keep the tears back by force of will and a comical squeezing together of her mouth. But the older people were going on with their discussion of what she was to do; and although Cousin Bert had withdrawn to a seat at the farther end of his writing-table, and was occupying his fingers with a paper-knife, and looking very dejected, he was listening and talking too, and Gladys presently found enough to interest her, and set her thoughts fairly spinning into the future.

"Captain Paget," Mr. Melrose was saying, "is anxious, of course, to fulfil the conditions of Colonel Dymond's will as soon as possible, so that when we have settled the business matters"—with a polite smile in Mr. Ferrol's direction—"I propose to take the young lady back to England with me. If we sail in the *Bothnia* on the 28th, we would be in London by the 7th of September. It is suggested that she, Miss Ferrol, should spend a few days with Mr. Bruce's family—Bruce, the famous R. A., you know. He is about as

near a relation as she will have in England, and Paget thought it just as well to have her make friends with them as soon as she went over."

"Yes," said Miss Lois, "of course that is best. If she must remain there four years, it is only fair to let her have friends at once."

"Oh, she will have plenty of *friends*," laughed Mr. Melrose.

Colonel Dymond's heiress was not likely to be wanting in these useful adjuncts, the man of the world thought, not without a momentary feeling of compassion for the extreme simplicity of this family; but the air of quiet refinement which pervaded everything, and seemed peculiarly to belong to the little lady at the fireside, had impressed him very favorably. He had noticed the striking pieces of wool-work, but he regarded them as fine specimens of the antique, and by no means merely old-fashioned. He thought of Bruce's artistically dressed sister, a girl just a trifle older than Gladys Ferrol. "When they put this little American into one of Miss Barbara's kind of garments," he reflected, "she will look decidedly striking. I wonder how much of the original Puritan she has left in her? But the dash of English blood ought to tell somewhere."

"And this—Honorable—Miss Dymond," said Miss Lois, with a slight access of color, "she is ready to receive Gladys after her little visit in London?"

"Oh dear, yes!" returned Mr. Melrose, promptly; but for some reason he did not seem to care to pursue this especial

branch of the subject. Truth to tell, Gladys's English relations had wondered not a little over Captain Paget's selection of a temporary guardian for his ward, but there was no one in authority to question his decision, and a correspondence with an officer on active duty in the East was rather unsatisfactory for argumentative purposes.

Gladys listened, sitting on one of the ottomans near the chimney-piece, but she could not talk, nor even frame questions in her mind. She was eager to hear more about it all, and to know what was really going to happen to her, yet, with the contradiction which was part of her feeling of bewilderment, she was relieved to be summoned away suddenly to her aunt Sarah. The invalid lady, who felt like a mother—or perhaps it is due to Miss Lois to say *grandmother*—to Gladys, was anxious to see the child, to look at her and speak to her, since this strange piece of news had come, upsetting all the quiet household, and jarring it out of all its accustomed sweetness and sense of home content.

CHAPTER V.

AUNT SARAH.

GLADYS flew out of the parlor and up the wide, c
fashioned staircase, with its two landings, its wind
overlooking the garden, and the dear familiar engravi
hanging along the wall. Aunt Sarah's room was the fr
chamber on the second story, and as she passed her days
a lounge there, everything that could contribute to her co
fort or amusement had been done for the room, and
bright-eyed old lady, in a soft white wool dressing-gow
with a dainty lace cap and pink satin ribbons, looked a che
ful centre of interest and animation, with a low table full
odds and ends drawn near her, the soft draperies of a w
dow near by, and a comfortable easy-chair drawn up rea
for her next visitor, whether without or within the ho
stead. It was Gladys this time who came in with fly
feet, and fairly rushed into Mrs. Ferrol's out-stretched ar
but she hardly knew whether to laugh or to cry, until Au
Sarah said, kissing the little locks on her niece's brow, &
trying to make her look up,

“My dear, I always *said* that old Colonel Dymond me
to keep his word.”

"Oh, tell me about him!" cried Gladys, moving back to the wicker chair. Up here in Aunt Sarah's cool dim room it seemed easy to talk—to ask any number of questions; and she established herself cosily, with a view to a comfortable chat.

"Why, I don't know just what to tell you, dear. He was certainly a very eccentric old man; but he was delighted with the genuine kind of welcome his American relations gave him. We used to think he had been tormented at home by people who only cared for what he could give them or leave them. At all events, he took a great fancy to you and to your mother, and always impressed me as a man who would do—well, just the sort of thing he has done now, though I'm sure I never expected quite *this*, my dear."

"But was he my uncle?" demanded Gladys, with wide-eyed interest.

"It was this way. Your grandfather married a second time, this Colonel Dymond's sister. He met her abroad, and I fancy the old colonel was not so well off then. They came right back to this country, and lived and died here. Your mother was the only daughter—indeed, the only child. As you know, dear, her name was Barbara; but her mother had asked her to name you Gladys Dymond, as she always clung to her English associations, poor thing."

"Why do you say 'poor thing,' Aunt Sarah?" said little Gladys.

"Why, because I always pity any one who has to make a

home in a foreign country ; and oh, my dear, it's just what you are going to do !”

“But it can never be *home*,” cried Gladys. “It's only for four years ; and then, auntie, only think, I can come back with all the money, and we'll never need to bother again about *anything*. You can go wherever you like for your health, and Cousin Bert can have—”

“My dear ! my dear !” said old Mrs. Ferrol, gently. Her soft dark eyes were dim with tears, but she shook her head slowly. She had lived a long life, full of varied experiences, until illness had placed her there on her sofa, day in and day out, and perhaps she knew how often people in the first flush of fortune mean well, and are ready to promise a great deal. She did not doubt her little niece's generous heart or loving, hopeful intentions, only she knew something of the world ; she stretched out one of her finely shaped, slim white hands, and laid it on Gladys's healthful little fingers, browned with the sun, but firm and shapely too—the real Ferrol hand, she had often said, poor lady, with deep satisfaction—and she smiled and sighed together with that little doubtful shake of the head, much to Gladys's perplexity, and perhaps annoyance.

“I wonder why he left it to me ?” she murmured, lifting her flushed face, and looking beyond her aunt's sofa out to the gardens lying golden in the afternoon light.

“Ah ! that is just it. Those English questions of inheritance are very apt to be queer things. I wonder if your getting this money, Gladys, brought sorrow or disappoint-



"I DON'T KNOW HOW YOU'LL BEAR TRANSPLANTING, MY DARLING."



ment into any special household? In England, you know, they think of those things very differently from us. They build on and expect legacies, if there is a rich relation."

A long time afterwards Gladys was to remember these words in a very strange fashion, and under very hard circumstances; but now their suggestion seemed only an added touch to what she had already decided was like a romance.

"Perhaps some one else did expect it," she said, dreamily. "Well, we can't tell, however, can we? Oh, Aunt Sarah, this gentleman—Mr. Melrose—says I am to be ready by the 28th. Only three weeks off!" cried Gladys, with a fresh access of loneliness coming over her. "Oh, must I go then?"

"No doubt, my darling. And oh, my child, how we shall miss you!"

"But you'll write me *everything*?" pleaded Gladys, "and I'll write you. And it will only be four years—or three and a half. We must remember that all the time I shall count the very days," cried Gladys, positively certain that no circumstance in life anywhere could alter her feelings, and conscious of the homestead as the shrine of her heart and her dearest affections now and for all time to come. But if Mrs. Ferrol made no definite answer to this, it was only because she had seen sixty years of life, whereas Gladys had only encountered the problems of fourteen.

"I don't know how you'll bear transplanting, my darling," she did say, in her tenderest voice, and Gladys answered, nestling her face down close to her aunt's soft old cheek,

"I won't take root, auntie; don't be afraid."

CHAPTER VI.

THE VISITORS.

IT was a decided relief that Mr. Melrose found it impossible to remain for tea or to stay all night. He explained that his wife was expecting him in Boston, and indeed he was making his adieus when Gladys returned to the parlor, so that very soon the family were alone; whereupon Miss Lois indulged in a genuine cry, which Gladys shared, while Mr. Ferrol went up-stairs to talk with his mother. The tea passed off in a state of suppressed excitement all around—Jane, the one servant and an old family friend, coming in and out from the kitchen on fruitless errands, declaring she could not remember what she was wanted for. Of course the French class had spread the news, and Miss Lois was not surprised and not exactly displeased by the appearance of Mrs. Hildreth and Mollie as she and Gladys were sitting in the summer twilight, still talking on the all-important question. By this time it had grown to seem a tangible reality, and Miss Lois had formed plans enough for her little cousin's future to give her an air of self-possession and calm authority over facts when the Hildreths appeared.

"Come in this way," cried Miss Lois, pleasantly, and

pushing the French windows further open. The visitors turned and made their way across the veranda, Mollie seizing Gladys, and rushing at once into the great question.

"*Weren't* you fairly paralyzed?" she exclaimed, when the two were seated in a far-off window, and Gladys had recounted all she knew of her great fortune.

"I should say so; but, Mollie, I dread going over there all alone."

"Nonsense!" cried Mollie; "I'd give anything to be in your place. I'll tell you what, Gladys, I mean to make father let us go across next summer, and then I can come to see you—to see what you have turned into," she added, nodding her head and smiling. Gladys smiled too, but she little thought when and how Mollie's next words would come back to her. "I'll find out whether you are a real heroine of romance or not. It will never do not to do or hear of something romantic. Of course there can't be another heir, because it was left you regularly in a will. But there'll have to be *something*;" and Mollie, leaning her head against the window, gazed at her friend speculatively, as though conjuring up a possible future in which that romantic "something" was to occur and give the final accent of success to Gladys's career. "We'll see," she continued; "and you know my predictions generally come true."

"Do they?" said honest Gladys. She might be imaginative and a bit romantic where her Lady Arabellas and Lord Fitzjohns were concerned, but in matters of fact she was a little Puritan in thought and speech. "Don't make any

about me, then," she added, laughing. "But it will be splendid if you *can* come over. Do you think you can? I shall be in Devonshire," said Gladys, with a sudden blush. "That is miles and miles from London, but it is the country which sent the Pilgrim Fathers over here. I am to go to a lady—she has *Honorable* before her name."

Mollie giggled. "How funny, isn't it?" she said, leniently. "Doesn't it sound sort of strong-minded?"

"Oh, do you believe it would be for that?" said Gladys, in an awe-struck whisper.

"You don't understand, girls," said Miss Lois, from her end of the room. "The title of Honorable is given to her—this Miss Dymond—because her father was a lord. I think," said the little lady, with a smile, "she would perhaps be shocked at the idea of being called a strong-minded woman."

"Well," declared Mrs. Hildreth, "no one need call her your Honor in speaking to her."

"It is different," said Miss Ferrol, shortly. She found it hard to say why, even to herself, yet she had already more than once taken up the defensive when Gladys's English connections were spoken of. Miss Ferrol might be doleful, and even antagonistic, and yet, grieving over the loss of her beloved charge as she did, Miss Lois could not help little thrills of pride and satisfaction in what had happened, and in the sense of traditionary importance which these newly found relationships gave Gladys. "After all," she said, hurriedly, "we're right to feel Devonshire a sort of background.

Why, Mrs. Hildreth, your ancestors, and mine too, came over in the *Mayflower*."

"Oh, I know," said Mrs. Hildreth. "But they never seemed English somehow—those Puritans—and they were American, you know, so soon. How much money was left, did you say?"

Miss Lois's thin, delicate cheek flushed a little. The actual amount of the money seemed to her mind unimportant—a trifle vulgar, perhaps, as a consideration—but she answered politely enough,

"I believe it is—nearly one hundred thousand pounds." She glanced towards the window in which the girls sat, with their heads near together, eyes flashing and lips moving quickly, almost afraid to have Gladys hear her.

"My dear!" ejaculated Mrs. Hildreth, bringing a large white hand down heavily upon Miss Lois's knee. "Well, it's a wonderful—stroke of luck."

"Here are the Lymans," called out Mollie; and Belle's figure, followed by her mother's, came flying up the path. Mollie was delighted to have been first, and she put her arms about Gladys's waist, determined to assert the superiority of her claims to intimate friendship. But Belle was too good-hearted to notice anything of the kind. She flew at Gladys, kissing her on both cheeks and talking half hysterically at once. Mrs. Lyman drifted towards the elders, and the great topic had every change rung upon it. When Mr. Ferrol appeared there was a momentary lull, a holding of breaths, as it were, until suddenly Belle exclaimed,

"Oh, but the straw ride! Will you give it up now?"

Every one laughed, and Mr. Ferrol said, heartily,

"I think not. Gladys may be the luckiest little girl in Harringford, if she chooses to think so, but I won't have her scorning one of my genuine American invitations yet a while."

"Scorning!" cried Gladys. She jumped up and stood in front of her cousin. "How can you talk like that? I never, never, never shall scorn anything American! As if I *could*!" There was a quiver on the girl's lips in spite of her eyes flashing. "You needn't any of you be afraid. I'll be just as American as—" She paused, flushed and emphatic.

"As an original Devonshire Puritan," said Cousin Bert, laughing. "That's right, Gladys."

"You're just horrid!" declared Gladys. "Come, girls. Do you know, I haven't told Duke one word of it yet. Let's go and find him."

And the three passed out into the veranda, thence to the gardens. A superb mastiff was lying in the last streak of sunset color near some dusty lilac bushes. He sprang up and shook himself as his little mistress approached.

"Poor old Duke!" exclaimed Gladys. "I wonder if they won't let me take you with me."

"Oh, if they do," exclaimed Belle, "I'll give you a collar to remember me by."

"How you talk!" said Mollie. "It's nothing at all to go abroad nowadays. Why, papa doesn't think anything of it!"

"*But to go for four years!*" exclaimed Gladys. She had

"POOR OLD DUKE! I WONDER IF THEY WON'T LET ME TAKE YOU WITH ME."





her hand on Duke's shaggy back, and she turned, looking up at the dear old house standing in the midst of the gardens, with the summer twilight settling down tenderly about it—about the gambrel roof, the tiled chimneys, the curving wing with the queer little windows in it belonging to the staircase. How peaceful, how homelike, how secure it looked ! And when should the little girl who had known only sunshine and content, the simple duties and pleasures of a quiet life therein, see or know it all again ? Some hot tears, forcing their way under the dark lashes, fell upon Duke's back, but Gladys brushed her eyes quickly with her hand. "For four years !" that was the hard part of this wonderful fortune ; but of one thing she was certain—no other place could, or would, or should ever seem home to her.

CHAPTER VII.

A CHANCE ENCOUNTER.

IF the details of her departure from home were for a time lost in the whirl and confusion of farewells, regrets, and lonely anticipations, Gladys felt as though every incident of her arrival in England would be indelibly impressed upon her mind. The voyage was successful; Mr. and Mrs. Melrose were very nice and kind, if they *did* treat her with an odd mixture of deference, and something which suggested their idea that she was only a "little girl"—she who had been consulted about so many important matters at the homestead, and been in some ways Miss Lois's right hand. But Gladys was soon to perceive that the deference was due to her exalted position as Colonel Dymond's heir. When Mrs. Melrose talked to her of her future, although it was done in a very lady-like way, there was a very distinct impression that Gladys was a person now with definite responsibilities—a "place" to fill, and a social degree of importance which was bounded on the one side by her wealth, and on the other by her connection with such people as the Dymonds. It was well meant, no doubt, Mrs. Melrose having a strong desire to make the little girl feel all that she owed to her English

relations, but it was ill-judged, since it fired Gladys with a spirit of defiance, and made her all the more anxious to assert herself as a genuine American.

The homestead training had been, did Mrs. Melrose but know it, all that was necessary for the refinement and simplicity of Colonel Dymond's little heiress; and adroit suggestions as to forms of speech—the "improvement" the Bruces, and later association with Miss Dymond would be to her—only seemed to rouse in little Gladys a passionate desire to show her new relations how much more she cared for everything American than she ever could for English ways. So that the very elements Mrs. Melrose dreaded—the little touch of self-consciousness and independence in Gladys's generous and really fine nature—were unduly excited, and the girl arrived in England with a certain "air" which Miss Lois would have regretted to see. But Gladys was too young to make proper distinctions, and she could not "take in" her idea of her fortune in the same spirit as did Mrs. Melrose. She was perhaps just a trifle intoxicated by an idea of her own importance, and the fact that she must keep her American sentiments at all times and on all occasions prominently in the foreground. Mrs. Melrose observed all this without the least idea that her well-meant suggestions had developed it, but she consoled herself by the reflection that four years among Dymonds and Pagets would make a different girl of the old colonel's heiress.

"And she really makes a very nice appearance," the kind-meaning little woman said to her husband, the morning they

landed in Liverpool, watching Gladys's slim, upright figure, clad in neat dark brown—for once she had been free to copy Mollie Hildreth's costume down to every bit of braid and each little button—as the girl stood at the side of the vessel, straining her gaze to take in every glimpse of the English shore as it came into view—the busy city with its crowded ports, the distant rim of green, flushed and very fair to see in all this summer glory. “Her head is remarkably well set on her shoulders,” the lady went on, reflectively. “I like that little proud look about her mouth and eyes, if only it does not increase, and her complexion is fine and healthy. Do you call her hair red? Oh no, James, not *red*! It is a real chestnut! and so soft and wavy. Yes, I think, so far as looks are concerned, she will pass muster, but she has terribly decided views. I declare she makes me shudder sometimes with her little way of politely or smilingly expressing her opinion, as if there was nothing else to be said on the subject. We were talking about the Bruces, and I took occasion to tell her how carefully they were brought up in certain ways; for instance, how Barbara had not yet, except on special occasions, been allowed to dine in the evening; and she stared at me in blank amazement. ‘As old as I am, is she, Mrs. Melrose?’ she said, as though she were a full-fledged young lady. ‘But, my dear,’ I said, ‘you are only a mere child, and you will find that *English* girls of your age are treated as such.’ I wish you could have seen her expression. She gave me a long look out of her big eyes, and drew her under lip up in that funny little way she has.

‘Do you *really* think they’ll treat me like a *child*?’ she said, gravely. ‘Of course, my dear,’ I answered, ‘you may be sure of it.’ It was *too* funny!’

But even in the confusion of their first arrival Gladys maintained the little air of dignity and independence which Mrs. Melrose’s treatment of her had provoked. She was greatly disappointed to find that the Melroses meant to hasten on at once to London.

“Why, then, I won’t see anything of Liverpool!” Gladys exclaimed, who was burning with a real tourist zeal, and almost as eager for sight-seeing as for her fortune. “It doesn’t seem like a ‘trip abroad.’”

“There will be plenty of time for that, my love,” said Mrs. Melrose, complacently. “You’ll be taken travelling all in good time.”

They were in the waiting-room of the crowded terminus of the North-western Railway by this time, and Gladys luckily found enough to occupy her eyes and ears in all the novel sights and sounds around her, so that Mrs. Melrose’s little “snubby” manner, as she called it to herself, was less jarring. Everything amused and interested her, from the porters in their fustian jackets, who were rolling the luggage about, to the long lines of “carriages,” marked first, second, and third class, which formed the railway-train, and where the “guards,” as she learned to call the conductors, were flinging open and shutting door-ways, affording the little American girl glimpses of the interiors—long enough for five seats facing each other, in the first-class compartments, apparently

well cushioned and luxurious. Mr. Melrose, with a clerk from his London office who had met them, was deep in the arrangement of the small belongings of the party, and securing a compartment all to themselves, while Mrs. Melrose, after answering some questions from her younger companion, gave herself up to the enjoyment of a novel. Meanwhile Gladys's eyes roved hither and thither eagerly, and perhaps just a trifle wistfully, for home began to feel far away, when suddenly, as if by some magnetic force, they encountered another pair of eyes, equally eager and wistful with her own; but whereas hers were taking in all sorts of objects, the other pair were fixed absolutely upon herself. Gladys started and colored violently, but she returned the gaze almost as though she meant it for a recognition; for the eyes fastened so intently upon her figure belonged to a girl about her own age, who was standing at a little distance from them near a news-stand—a tall, thin girl, with an unmistakable air of refinement about her, in spite of her shabby clothes, her well-worn little straw hat, her mended gloves, and whole impression of something like genteel poverty; and she had a pretty, speaking face too, for all its meagreness of outline.

The eyes so watchful of Gladys were a soft, liquid hazel; the pretty hair in its braided loops shone like gold where the rays of sunshine fell upon it, and there was a suspicion of mirth, or the capacity for it, about her lips. Something about the girl fascinated Gladys at once; she looked at her earnestly and smilingly, and longed to know who she was.

But suddenly Mrs. Melrose laid down her book ; she, too, met this searching gaze of the stranger, and to Gladys's surprise colored with annoyance. The girl at the news-stand fled precipitately towards the door, and at the same moment the tall, thin figure of a gentleman loomed within it—a pale, severe-looking, elderly gentleman, neatly dressed, but, like the girl, with a painful sort of shabbiness. There are all kinds of shabbiness, as we know—every degree, from the first stage of an over-glossy look to the actually threadbare ; but nothing that can compare in effect to that period where the very last effort at keeping up an air of gentility seems to be made, and this was the impression given even to little Gladys by this pair of travellers.

It was impossible for her to hear what they said in the door-way to each other, but Gladys concluded they must be father and daughter, and at the same time she felt certain that Mrs. Melrose knew something of them. But there was no time to ask, as Mr. Melrose and the very polite clerk came hurrying forward to say they must take their places. With a sensation of delight over her first English journey, Gladys found herself ensconced in a corner seat, very luxuriously cushioned, with Mrs. Melrose facing her, and the gentlemen in the other end, and the train soon whirled away into a country which looked enchantingly green and fresh, but to Gladys's American eyes like a succession of well-ordered gardens—fields divided by deep-toned hedges, meadows smooth as any lawn, here and there a glimpse of a village, with a church spire dominating the red-tiled roofs of

cottages or showing among dense foliage. The novelty of the stations they passed, the polite inquiries of the guards as the train paused rarely, and the first impressions of country forms and colors in this English land, all filled Gladys's eyes and brain so completely that the little incident of encountering that anxious, friendly, serious gaze from a perfect stranger might have been forgotten, but for one thing. As the twilight deepened, and Mr. Melrose laid down his paper, he came nearer to his wife, and Gladys heard her say, in a marked tone,

"Did you see Ralph Beresford in the station at Liverpool? He was there with one of his daughters."

Even in the shadow Gladys could see the lawyer's face change in expression.

"No!" he exclaimed. "I wonder how he chanced to be there. What a narrow world it is!"

"Yes, and I think the girl must have known our errand; at least, I saw her staring with all her eyes at—" No name was given, but a significant pause told the rest, and Mr. Melrose said, hastily,

"Well, poor things, I must say I can't help feeling sorry for them, and I can't see why they couldn't have had *something*."

But although Mrs. Melrose laid a warning hand quickly upon her husband's knee, enough had been said to fire Gladys's curiosity and interest. Who could the father and daughter be? and what had Mr. Melrose meant? She bent her gaze on the fast darkening landscape, but with a distinct

determination to find out more about these strangers who dressed so shabbily, and yet were evidently refined people. The cold, pale face of the father, with its handsome, severe outlines, rose to her mind, but the pretty, animated countenance of the girl was a pleasanter picture. *Beresford*. Gladys repeated the name to herself carefully. At all events, she need not forget that. *Ralph Beresford*. She decided to write it down in her journal at once, for with her natural tendency towards the romantic, and her eagerness just at this time to notice everything, Gladys was sure *something* would come of this chance encounter, and she meant to arm herself with whatever information she could acquire. And yet, strange to say, something made it impossible for her to ask any questions of either of her present guardians. Mr. Melrose would be sure to be non-committal, and Mrs. Melrose might administer one of her carefully worded rebukes. When Gladys went to sleep that night in the hotel to which the party were driven at once on coming in lamplit London, her dreams were a mixture of home and England, and Belle Lyman seemed to be looking at her with eager, wistful hazel eyes, and to be trying to make her understand who she was.

CHAPTER VIII.

LITTLE BARNFORD.

WHILE Gladys was nearing London, the pair whom she had observed in the station were speeding in another direction. Part of their journey had been made in a third-class carriage on the same train which held the party from America, but they had changed at a junction, and seven o'clock on the late summer evening found them alighting at a little rural village in Devonshire, of which very little was to be seen from the station except a hilly street which terminated some distance from the railway in the open country. It was a pretty, peaceful place, with a hint of moorland breezes about it, and the bold rich hues of the tors coloring the distance; but to these travellers—father and daughter, as Gladys had surmised—it represented much that was dreary, if not actually painful, and the expression of the man's face showed very distinctly what he felt. The slight exhilaration of travelling had passed away. He looked even paler and sterner than when Gladys's happy eyes had rested briefly on his face, and the haggard and discontented lines there were now apparent. But even in the moment that they lingered on the platform the young girl's expression

showed that she was full of life and animation, not to be checked even by a return to the dull little village. Her eyes were alight, and she felt herself full of a strange sort of excitement. The encounter with Gladys Ferrol in the Liverpool station was a wonderful event to her; it would be something "to tell" of her journey which the family at home assuredly could not expect, and she was impatient to start on their walk and be so much nearer to the enjoyable hour of revelation and discussion; and I am very sure that what gave the prospect a peculiar charm was the fact that the talk would be a half-whispered one, however eager, since there must be no word of it before her father. The only mention she had made to him of seeing Gladys had been met by such a look of disapproval and such a chilling silence that she had ventured no further, but with her mother and the rest it would be different.

"Come, father," she said, as cheerily as possible, "do let us get home."

"Why are you hurrying me?" the gentleman answered, in a tone which was as querulous as the circumstances could possibly allow. "What do you expect to find, Winifred—your mother and sister sitting up in state waiting to receive you?"

It was well for little Winifred that she had grown used to her father's sarcastic references to their poverty, or such a remark might have dashed her good spirits effectually. She shook her head and smiled gayly.

"No, father dear, quite the reverse. I expect to find

mother in the garden, weeding perhaps a little bit, and Janey in the kitchen, and—”

“There! there! My dear Winifred, I had no idea of your chattering powers, I declare, before this journey!” exclaimed the father, in vexation. “Come, we may as well get on;” and holding out a hand to his tall young daughter, Mr. Beresford walked towards the village, the thatched roofs of whose first houses were already beginning to catch the gleams of sunset light.

It was a curious and quaint little place, and although scarcely two miles from a large market-town, it had all the simplicity, and even some of the architecture, of its mediæval days; but one can find many just such in the England of these days, where even the thoughts and ways of speech among the people are set in a channel and a mould of so very long ago that the ideas and actions of to-day seem like an impertinent intrusion. Gladys in her smart new gown, her broad-brimmed hat with its drooping plumes, her fine gloves and écreu silk parasol, would have seemed a figure surprisingly out of place in the little rural street where the shabbiness of Ralph Beresford and his daughter took on quite another aspect. *They* looked only out of fashion with the gay world, but *in* fashion with this place, where—so far at least as the little village was concerned—everything was as primitive, and what the people there would have called “homely” as possible.

To say that it was absolutely unlike an American place of the same population and rank among abiding-places would



WINIFRED AND HER FATHER.

be true, and yet not at all descriptive. Little Barnford, as it was called, consisted of one wide, hilly street with a few quaint-looking shops at the lower end; an inn with a queer old swinging sign and projecting parlor-window with small latticed panes of glass; a blacksmith's forge, where the fire leaped and blazed merrily; one very comfortable-looking red-brick house, standing in the midst of a walled garden, and near to a group of long, low buildings known as Barnford Pottery, and owned by Mr. Joyce, the one rich man of the village, who lived in the brick house, and would like to have ruled everything and everybody. Beyond the shops were houses chiefly of the thatched cottage order, nearly all containing a bit of garden or some show of flowers in their windows, and almost at the end of the street was a church-yard full of graves. A yew walk and some fine old trees made an imposing centre for an old gray stone church, supposed to have been built by the same friars who in the fifteenth century taught the Little Barnford people how to read and write.

Beyond this peaceful spot, where, among the tallest trees, some rooks held high revel, and were much thought of by the villagers, the country stretched away to the moors, open, breezy, and rather wild, and the squarely built house towards which Mr. Beresford walked, still clasping his daughter's hand, stood a slight distance from the church, set back a little, as though half ashamed of its own grimness and lack of grace. There was a sort of a garden between the front door and the little gate in the hedge which divided it from the

roadway. It contained such flowers as could be reared hardily and with little care, but this was the one bright effect, if I may so call it, about the place. The house was built of gray stone and brick, and if the Beresfords had been able to keep it up in any way, it might have presented a fine appearance, for it was not without an air of solidity, and the windows, deep set, and with carved framework and stone ornamentation, once in good repair, still gave it some distinction; but, on the whole, such traces of former splendor suggested all the more painfully the fallen fortunes of the family, and to Mr. Beresford, who was both cynical and sensitive, and inclined to regard everything in a morbid light, the stone cherubs or the carved ledges looked to him like a travesty of what, by rights, he felt he and his children ought to have.

The front door on this summer evening was opened almost before the travellers were inside the gate. A girl, taller, although younger than Winifred, and with blond hair and a timid, anxious sort of face, stood in the hall-way. As Winifred flew forward to greet her, she whispered eagerly,

"Oh, papa was unsuccessful! I see it in his face."

"Yes," whispered Winifred. She glanced back at her father's weary figure hesitating among the garden-beds. "Are you coming in, papa?" she said, a little timidly, after another word from Janey, "or shall I ask mamma to go out to you?"

"I am coming in," he answered, with a sigh. "How are you, Janey? Ask your mother to make ready a little supper for me on a tray, and bring it into my study. I am tired."

He passed his daughters by, and went quickly down the narrow passage-way, which ran the length of the house, to a room at its lower end. Enough of daylight still lingered to show a large, cheerless room with rows of well-filled bookshelves, a faded carpet patched and drawn together, a well-worn horse-hair sofa, some tolerable chairs, and a large study table littered with books and papers. The poverty which was apparent in the very entrance of the house showed itself more obtrusively here; for while it was evident that this Mr. Beresford was a man of scholarly tastes and pursuits, he had not in this "sanctum sanctorum" one of the innumerable comforts or cheering conveniences which encourage study and work in a literary life. Everything was bare and uninviting; and how it had made poor Winifred's heart ache to see in Liverpool so many little things which would have made her father's study seem a paradise! But bread and butter were hard enough to procure for the little household, and its master sternly refused to have a penny spent upon luxuries, even for his own convenience. Winifred might hope and plot and plan as she passed shop-windows, but there could be no purchase made. And yet how different they had once thought life might be!

CHAPTER IX.

THE BERESFORDS.

WHILE Mrs. Beresford was sitting with her husband over his supper, the two girls were up-stairs in the long room they had shared for years together. Its windows were tall and narrow and uncurtained, save by what Janey called a little "flop" of muslin, but they looked out upon the rich rolling country, so wild and free, and full of shifting, varying lights, that Janey made up endless stories about what had happened, or might happen, upon it.

"And so you actually saw her!" Janey was saying, in awe-struck tones. "How strange it was! What is she like?"

"Oh, very pretty and ladylike," said Winifred, with enthusiasm; "not a bit like what you'd think an American would be, you know. Just—why, just like any one else. I caught myself staring at her with all my eyes, and that young Mrs. Melrose looked at me as if she'd crush me then and there."

"Dear me!" said Janey, with all the contempt she could put into her tone.

"You see," Winifred continued, laying away her "best" dress in the drawer of the bureau, and coming to her sister's

side, "I knew who she was directly Mr. Melrose spoke to her, and we had seen the luggage; and then, you know, on the way up, as I told you, Mrs. Cleve had said she was coming over about this time." Winifred hesitated. She hardly knew whether or not to continue this almost forbidden topic, but the entrance of her mother put an end to her doubts. It would be all right with this auditor, and the boy who followed her was no drawback whatever.

Perhaps it was the father's moodiness and reserve which had made all the rest of the family so united, but at all events there was no question of a *tête-à-tête* being preferable if the four could get together. Mrs. Beresford was a woman whose whole life had been one of gentle, unwearying self-sacrifice, so that it would have seemed hard to believe that she was once as alert and animated as tall young Winifred, whose eyes, with their sweet, dark gleam, were clearly inherited from the slender and fragile mother; but years of care and thought for others, of pinching and saving, and mending and making, tell upon the brightest nature, and a quiet kind of endurance had taken the place of hopeful animation with Mrs. Beresford. She had very little of her husband's peculiar kind of pride, poor woman! As her girls well knew, things might have been very different had she been left to direct them, but she had only been allowed to be a passive, heart-wrung looker-on, while the very necessities of daily life, it would almost seem, were taken away from them. But among her children Mrs. Beresford might yet have been happy had she seen them even well fed and well clothed, for

there was a wealth of love between the mother and her little flock. Winifred came first, of course, although the eldest, Arthur, was a boy, but he was away from home.

"Sit here, mamma dear," Winifred said, jumping up from the little low chair she had occupied. "There, are you comfortable? It was about the heiress we were talking. I told you we saw her."

"Yes," said Mrs. Beresford, gazing into the bright face before her. "We must try and forget it all, because your father—he spoke of it down-stairs, and he will be terribly angry if any one of you try to see her or know her."

"But, mamma, she is not coming for a day or two. Mrs. Cleve, you know, went up in the train with us, and of course she knows, from having been Miss Honora Dymond's maid so long before she had the shop, and she says she is going to Mr. Bruce's first."

"My love," said Mrs. Beresford, "I am afraid papa would not like to have you talk even to Mrs. Cleve about these things. Indeed I must tell you that he said he particularly desired us to forget her existence."

"Oh, mamma!" cried Janey; "as if we could! And does papa think we are blocks of wood or bits of stone, that we can forget or remember, and not care? He does not care, perhaps, because he satisfied his pride, and—"

"Hush, my dearest little girl!" exclaimed Mrs. Beresford, putting her hand on Janey's trembling one. It was so unusual to see Janey yield to a petulant mood like this that it almost frightened her mother, yet the poor woman knew that

the child's judgment was right in a measure. Donald, the one boy in the little group, gave his sister's chair a kick.

"Don't be a goose, Janey," he said, with uncompromising frankness. "If you begin to talk like that you'll have papa giving us a definite order about it, and then we can't so much as go into the Priory woods while that girl is there."

"I know you will be careful even about that, Don," said the mother. If it was hard for Mrs. Beresford to feel that her husband was over-harsh with the children, and that with the frankness of youthful arbiters they judged him aright, yet it was a comfort to her to know that they spoke out all their minds freely before her, and never, poor things, went against her slightest wish. So she kept peace all around, often when it was only for "mother's sake" that a holiday refused was borne, or unduly long lessons learned, or a harsh reprimand received patiently.

Donald, like all the Beresfords, was tall, and inclined to "favor" his mother in looks, with wavy dark hair and bright, handsome eyes; but the ill-fortunes of the family had already begun to tell upon his nature, poor lad, and the restrained, gloomy life of the "Tor House," as it was called, affected his spirits. He was sixteen, however, and a boy, and he could, after all, make his escape sooner or later out into the world and fight his way, but without friends, influence, or money, and with that terrible Beresford pride! It was only like a last resource that this was to be thought of, unless the father should suggest it himself. But so long as Mr. Beresford could contrive to keep a roof over their heads,

and dry bread on the table, by his pen, he would unquestionably be ruler of his children's fates, and yet I am afraid that in the case of the girls the family pride had degenerated sadly. As for Winifred, she would gladly have accepted a place behind Mrs. Cleve's counter, and sold wools and crochet-needles all day long, in order to see a little more comfort and good cheer infused into her mother's and sister's lives.

The harmonious little group talked an hour longer, drifting away from the forbidden topic, more because it troubled the mother than because interest in it flagged. They did not light the candles standing on the high chest of drawers, even when the very last of the long summer twilight faded, and the stretch of country, the purplish-yellow moorland, was full of deep shadows. But no one of the party minded it; they were used to sitting in the soft darkness, holding each other's hands, and talking in the subdued tones which seemed to be involuntary in the dusk. These were the hours when Mrs. Beresford felt happiest, her "bairns," as she always called them, nestling about her and chattering freely. All sorts of hopes and plans and good feelings could spring into existence and be developed while they sat thus talking, only dimly seeing each other's faces, but very strongly conscious of each other's sympathy and interest, and all the bare cheerlessness of the tumble-down old house could be forgotten, hidden by those kindly shadows of nightfall, not to pass away until the sunshine of to-morrow.

Mrs. Beresford liked to tell her children at such times sto-

ries of her own youth, her happy girlhood away in Scotland, where their papa met her and married her, all in one sweet summer. He was living with old Colonel Dymond in those days, and every one had approved the match, for he was unquestionably a literary genius. The young people liked to hear all about their Scotch grandparents, and what mamma did when she was their age. Meagre enough would be the story of their own young lives, poor things! Still, it is hard to be very unhappy at fifteen, and I cannot say that Winifred Beresford was much depressed by the circumstances of her life. She was too young, too bright, and too hopeful. The world in the future seemed to the girl fairly teeming with possibilities. As usual, it was the sound of the father's footsteps on the stairs which broke up the little conference. Mr. Beresford came along the passage-way slowly, his candle sending a faint streak of light into the dark room.

"Are you there, Jean?" he said, in his reproachful tones.

"I will come in for a word with you later, my darling," Mrs. Beresford whispered to Winifred. "Go to bed now, and I will come in as soon as I can."

The sisters undressed in the dark, and Janey, in her bed at one side of the room, was soon asleep, but Winifred lay awake waiting for her mother. She had been to Liverpool with her father, as he could not travel alone, and the journey was imperative, but she had her secret mission from her mother.

Arthur, the eldest brother, had broken away from the re-

strains of home, from the grinding poverty and idleness. He had declared it impossible at nineteen to go on construing Greek and Euclid, and investigating the stars in their courses, under his father's direction, while the girls and his mother were in need of the actual necessities of life. He shared none of the defiant sort of pride which made it almost a pleasure to Mr. Beresford to show the world what the injustice, as he called it, of his kinsman had done for him. Arthur was young, able-bodied, and naturally restless; and after repeated discussions with his father, each one of which ended in the same way, he had declared he must start out for himself. This meant annihilation, so far as the father was concerned, especially since Arthur's bent was painting. If he could have scraped together the means of the barest existence, the lad would have gone away to the Continent. As it was, he had with difficulty obtained a position as clerk in an art-dealer's in Liverpool, where he hoped to learn something, and where he was brought into contact with people who might further his ambitious designs. All of this was added gall and wormwood to Mr. Beresford; but to the girls and their mother Arthur was not alone a genius, but a hero. To save and hoard, by pennies even, a trifling sum to send the boy, was the very joy of their lives, and now Winifred had actually seen him!

"Are you awake, dear?" said Mrs. Beresford's voice, and Winifred started up.

"Yes, yes, mamma. Will you lie down beside me? There! Oh, mamma, you are tired out; I know by the way you sigh."

"My dearest, I never feel so tired when I have my little daughter with me."

"Is that so, mamma? I am so glad!" Winifred's arm crept around her mother, and she laid her cool young cheek down upon Mrs. Beresford's shoulder. After all, she had what Gladys Ferrol could never know, what all her wealth could not purchase.

"Arthur looked thin and pale, mamma dear, but he said he was well," Winifred went on, in a whisper. "And he was so glad to see me, and to get the little package, and hear about you all. He is painting his picture, you know, and he has obtained admission to some studio where there is a night class. They have models. He says he is sure he'll get on. I went up into his room, mamma. I am afraid you'd be rather frightened if you saw how bare it is; but then boys don't mind, and Arthur made great fun out of his contrivances. By using that room away up over the art-dealer's shop he saves rent, you see. He has a little cupboard which he calls the larder, and he makes his own coffee in the morning. An old woman who attends to the fires in winter and the sweeping and dusting in the shop in summer has mended his things for him, and he says he knows if he was ill she'd look after him. Oh, mamma, I believe you are crying! Why, you ought to hear Arthur talk about it. He never was funnier about anything."

"My darling, I know," said the poor mother. "We all understand what that boy's spirits are, and how good and patient he can be; but do you suppose I can be a mother

and not feel my heart wrung by the thought of my lad alone in that garret, working day and evening, and only a poor old woman to look to for any need or comfort?"

"I know," whispered Winifred; "but, mamma, his patience isn't everything." There was a pause, and in the darkness Winifred recalled her brother's face as he had stopped his merry-making to say a few earnest words to her. "Mamma," she went on, "he told me that, for all the other fellows jeering at him, he never forgot what he promised you, and he said this: 'Tell mamma I have more real *faith* here than I ever had before. Sometimes I think it's a good thing to have to fight for it.'"

"Thank God for that! My dear boy!" The mother and daughter were silent for some time. Then Winifred felt her mother's hand close warmly upon hers, and she was kissed good-night.

"We have much to be grateful for, after all, my darling," whispered the mother before she went away.

Winifred, left alone, felt as though she would stay awake a long time, so much had she to occupy her mind. Her father had gone to Liverpool to obtain a position which he had known to be vacant on a paper; but others apparently better fitted were ahead of him, and so he had come back to his old work, his moodiness, and the restrictions which he imposed upon all around him. For Winifred it was a return to a very narrow, hard round of calculation and work and care, but still, as I have said, she was young and healthy. Her thoughts strayed easily enough to the girl who had so

strangely inherited nearly all of Colonel Dymond's wealth. It was impossible not to feel an interest in her, and an eager curiosity in all concerning her, and Winifred could not wholly dislike Gladys after looking at her bright, fine young face. If only things had been just a little different! There was a sort of mystery about it all, as Winifred well knew, since the actual reasons for Colonel Dymond's withdrawal of his favor had never been told her, and the girl wished heartily they had never been brought up to expect so much from him. Nothing now could be done about it. As Winifred knew, Mr. Beresford had made every possible inquiry at the time of the old colonel's death as to the validity of the will. It was all right. Colonel Dymond had talked it over with his lawyer only the day before his death, expressing himself entirely satisfied with its provisions, but the family at Tor House had been plunged into misery by it.

Winifred let her thoughts drift back to those days three months ago, to the time when they were told of the American girl's wonderful fortune, to the hints given her of something in the background, something which she vaguely felt to have been her father's fault, and then, as sleep came to her, the last bit of consciousness centred in a thought of Gladys Ferrol herself—the tall, upright girl, with those frank gray eyes which had certainly gazed into hers with something sweet and friendly in their glance. So it happened that, on the first night of her coming to her new home, Gladys up in London and Winifred Beresford down in Devonshire fell asleep thinking of each other.

CHAPTER X.

IN LONDON.

I AM very sure that Gladys will be pardoned for the condition of excitement she felt herself in that first day in London, for as yet nothing had been systematized, and everything seemed to the little girl to be in a sort of whirl—delightful, no doubt, and tinged with rose-color, but yet very bewildering.

She addressed the reflection of herself in her mirror while she was dressing, asking the happy face in the glass if it really belonged to Gladys Ferrol of Haringford; and then she laughed, wishing that some of the girls might be with her.

“So you are actually an heiress, are you, miss?” she said, making a little grimace. “Let us see that you behave yourself accordingly.”

“Where are we going to-day?” she asked Mrs. Melrose directly after breakfast. She was quiet enough outwardly, although her eyes were full of merry light, and her every movement suggested the alert eagerness so hard to repress; and yet she felt decidedly conscious of her new dignity, and anxious to receive events with a suitable “air”—such as

one of her own heroines would so readily assume under similar circumstances.

"Where are we going?" repeated Mrs. Melrose, looking up from a pile of letters on the table before her. "Where would you like to go?"

"Oh, everywhere!" cried Gladys. She was in the window of the private sitting-room of the hotel, and looked out through the fine golden haze of the morning on the London streets—the row of tall houses opposite, with their balconies gay with flowers, and beyond them the green foliage of a park. "There is the Tower," said Gladys, reflectively. "I'm wild to see that."

"Oh, we must not think of sight-seeing to-day," said Mrs. Melrose, in genuine alarm. "You know you have some shopping to do, and at two o'clock you are expected at the Bruces'. But I will tell you, Gladys, we will have a hansom, so that as we drive about you can see something of the town."

Luckily, Gladys's frame of mind made every suggestion of movement acceptable. She had the shopping list which Miss Lois had made out, agreeing with Mrs. Melrose that the purchases should be made as soon as they arrived in London, and there was fascination enough in such an expedition, with unlimited means at hand. Then Gladys, who knew as little of New York or Boston as she did of London, had never been in a hansom, and when one of those delightful cabs was sent for, and she followed Mrs. Melrose into it, and the little doors were closed like an apron in front of them, a thrill of delight

went through the young girl, who began to feel that her English life might contain limitless novelties and amusements.

"Russell & Allen's" was the order Mrs. Melrose had given, and Gladys laughed as the driver opened his little trap above their heads to repeat "Russell & Hallen's, my lady?" and an affirmative from Mrs. Melrose sent them speeding away in the direction of the busy streets ahead of them. Gladys had a general impression of finely built streets, yellow stone or brick houses, parks or squares in which a great deal of summer-like verdure still lingered, with finally an endless vista of a wide thoroughfare flanked by shops and houses, and showing here and there turnings into side streets almost as active, or narrow pathways ending in a *cul-de-sac*. Omnibuses with passengers on the roofs and a conductor swinging on the door-step, and shouting out the names of streets they passed; hansoms rattling by, and the clumsier four-wheeled cab, and sometimes fine open carriages containing ladies in summery toilets; crowds of pedestrians coming and going on as many and various errands; now and again the outline of a public statue, and occasionally a glimpse of some fine and imposing mansion whose door-way was set in the very midst of the ebb and flow of this tide of humanity—all of these elements in the active scene combined to make up Gladys's first picture of London; and she had been so silent, from the intensity of her interest in it all, that she was startled by the sudden jerking up of the hansom at the entrance of the fine shop in Bond Street where she was to make her first purchases as a young lady of fortune.

Back to her mind like a flash came the room in the home-
stead where Miss Lois had written out the list she was now
drawing out of her pocket-book. How tenderly and loving-
ly had her cousins discussed what their child would need !
Gladys could see Miss Lois's delicate, finely cut face as she
rested the tip of her pencil thoughtfully on her lips, while
Mrs. Ferrol suggested this and that, and Miss Lois either
nodded affirmatives or expressed a gentle dissent. And here
were the items in Miss Lois's prim copper-plate : gloves, un-
derwear, black dresses, a cloak—"a paletot, they call it," Miss
Lois had said, in a smiling parenthesis—a good water-proof,
a shawl, etc.

Gladys, lifting her eyes *from the neatly written page,
found a very elegant young lady in a sweeping black silk
gown talking to Mrs. Melrose, a mixture of affability and
deference making her manner quite irresistible.

"We will look at the smaller articles first, I think," Mrs.
Melrose was saying, as the young lady in the long black
silk led the way to a fascinating department, where Gladys
was called upon to choose a dressing-case and other dainty
toilet requisites, all of which were to have her monogram
upon them. Little Mrs. Melrose, had her charge but known
it, was enchanted by the opportunity for preparing Gladys
for her journey to Miss Dymond, and made the purchases
on a scale that took the girl's breath away ; but it all in-
creased the delightful kind of intoxication which she had
come to regard as part of her new life, and in a short time
Gladys found herself very critical over umbrella handles,

and inclined to be supersensitive on the subject of embroideries. The obsequiousness of all the clerks in the great shop she accepted, enjoying it all thoroughly, and more than one exchanged complimentary remarks with his or her companion on the liberal orders given for the tall, pretty young girl who followed Mrs. Melrose with such a bright, interested manner, such a soft color in her cheeks and happy light in her eyes.

"There, my dear," Mrs. Melrose said, finally, "we have spent forty pounds. Quite enough for to-day, I think Captain Paget would say. The address, did you say?"—this to the young lady in the black silk.—"Miss Ferrol, 94 Morley Square, Kensington; and be sure the things are sent to-day, as Miss Ferrol is going out of town to-morrow."

"Am I?" said Gladys, when they were in the hansom again. For some reason there had seemed a certain vagueness about just what she was to do, and in all the confusion of her arrival she had not thought to ask very much about plans made for her immediate future. In a half-attentive way she had heard them discussed, knowing that Cousin Bert had gone carefully over every possible business question with Mr. Melrose; but beyond the fact that the Honorable Miss Dymond was to have charge of her until her guardian's return from the East, Gladys knew very little as to what her new life might include.

"Miss Dymond's own maid is to come for you, my dear," said Mrs. Melrose, as they were whirling on again. "And you are to stay to-night at Mr. Bruce's, because I have to get

back to our own house in Essex. They will manage everything nicely for you. There, Gladys, we are in Hyde Park now."

Gladys leaned forward eagerly, and took in the charming picture of the Park on a September morning with eyes that seemed under a spell. The endless "drive;" the "Row," where equestrians were slowly pacing up and down or cantering gayly; the brilliancy and bloom, the rich green of the foliage; the lake and the great "Memorial" shining golden in the morning light—all these objects seemed part of her fairy-land; and turning her eyes in a new direction towards which the hansom was speeding, she saw the curve, and rich red and yellow hues, of the Kensington Museum and Albert Hall, towards which a crowd were streaming for the morning concert advertised on great placards just outside the entrance-way.

It was a trifle earlier than Mrs. Melrose had appointed for their visit to Mr. Bruce's; but then, as she said, it would make no difference.

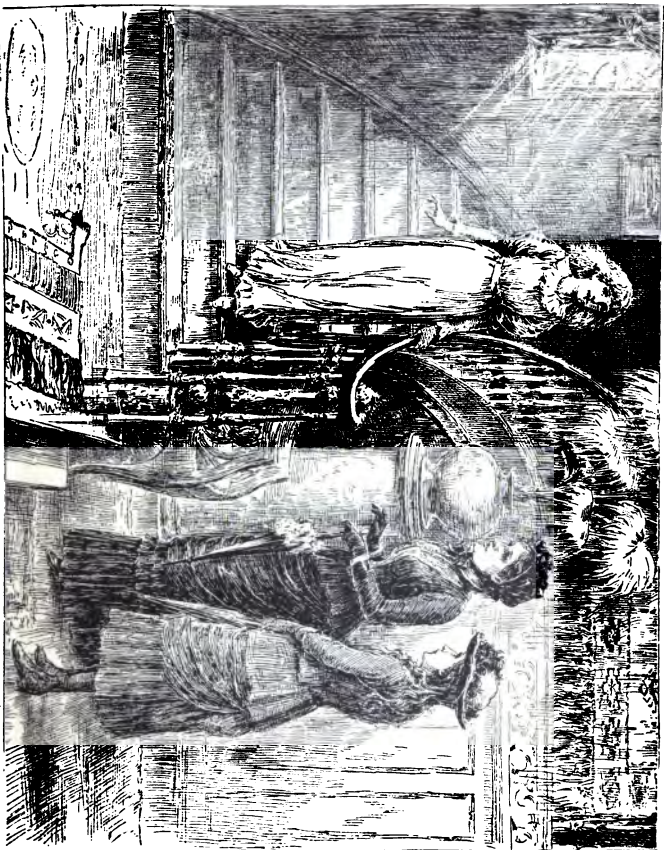
"They are so anxious to see you," she added, with a pleasant smile; and suddenly a strange pang of loneliness shot through Gladys's heart; for these were the first words which had contained any hint of a welcome in them to the young girl, who had once or twice begun to wonder if perhaps she might not be regarded only as an interloper.

The gayety seemed for an instant to have gone out of the sunshine as Gladys bent her head to hide the mist that gathered in her eyes; but she looked up quickly as the han-

som stopped before a long brick wall, above which were visible the tops of some white flowering shrubs, and beyond these the irregular lines of a beautiful quaint house of red brick, set in what seemed to Gladys a luxuriance of bloom and green, quite unlike the usual aspect of a town house. But in London, as she learned later, there are many such; and Mr. Bruce, R.A., was a man who liked his surroundings to savor as little of the noise and bustle of the town as possible.

The hansom was dismissed. Gladys followed Mrs. Melrose through a gate of iron scroll-work, and up a short pathway to the entrance of the house. The door was opened, and the American girl found herself for the first time crossing an English threshold. Ahead of her was a large, beautiful hall-way with light oak finishings, walls hung with etchings or engravings, door-ways curtained in silk of East Indian texture and rich, soft colors. A low curving staircase was lighted at the side by stained-glass windows that sent little quivering gleams of color across the polished surface of the steps, and centred about the object which of all things riveted Gladys's attention.

It was the figure of a girl about her own age, who had paused midway in her descent of the stairs, and now stood resting one hand on the balustrade, startled a little by the appearance of strangers. She was quaintly dressed in a gown of sombre-hued, lustreless silk, made with puffed sleeves, rather a short skirt, and a round bodice. Her profuse hair, of a pale golden color, was cut straight across in



SHE LOOKED LIKE A FIGURE FROM AN OLD PICTURE.



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front, and hung in a wonderful fleecy cloud, like a gold mist, about her shoulders; and her face, in spite of certain saucy curves and the gayest of brown eyes, was picturesque and delicate. To Gladys she looked like a figure out of an old picture or a story-book.

But in a moment the silence was broken. The girl on the stairway smiled radiantly, and ran down, holding out her hand to the visitors, and exclaiming, with the prettiest air of welcome,

“Oh, Mrs. Melrose, how do you do? and I am sure this is Gladys Ferrol—our American cousin.”

CHAPTER XI.

BARBARA.

GLADYS could hardly explain how it was that in the next hour she found herself thoroughly at home with Mr. Bruce's little sister Barbara. She had fancied that English girls were cold, and difficult to make acquaintance with, but Barbara had no stiffness of manner. She led the visitors up-stairs, chatting pleasantly, her bright eyes scanning Gladys critically, no doubt, yet with the very softest friendliness in their glance, and pushing back a portière leading to the long drawing-room, said, in a pleasant voice, "Violet, here are Mrs. Melrose and—Miss Ferrol."

A lady past the bloom of girlishness, yet still youthful-looking and delicately pretty in Barbara's style, put down some fancy-work, and came forward from an anteroom, as ready as her young sister with a kindly welcome.

No wonder people considered Morpeth Lodge, as Mr. Bruce's house was called, an enviable home for his two sisters, and in spite of his being a bachelor, no fireside or dinner-table in London was more hospitable. Violet, or Miss Bruce, was nearly thirty years of age—old enough to be a steady little mistress of the house and chaperon for Bar-

bara, and there was always some elderly relative ready to step in when an additional "weight," as Mr. Bruce said, was needed.

The beautiful room almost dazzled Gladys at first. It was not overcrowded, and there was no sense of glare or confusion in the objects, only a harmonious mingling of rich, soft tones and graceful forms. The darkly polished floor had rugs of indefinite hues; the walls were carefully hung with pictures—water-colors and etchings, and some fine proof engravings well arranged; tall antique cabinets stood on either side of the chimney-piece; there were chairs of various sizes and character, from the low plush-covered one Miss Bruce had risen from to the capacious Chippendales in a western window. The bric-à-brac was in perfect taste, and what charmed Gladys in her first swift survey of the room was a quaint little windowed recess at the farther end, where a cushion of dull green made the deep window-seat inviting, the light filtering pleasantly through stained-glass panes, while on one side, set into the framework, was a row of shelves filled with books, and suggesting hours of cosey reading in wet weather or a long twilight.

"We would have gone to see you at the hotel at once," Barbara's elder sister was explaining; "but we thought you would be out, and it would be nicer to have you come directly here. Now, Barbara, take Miss Ferrol—or shall I not say Gladys?—up to your room, and then we will go down to luncheon."

Gladys followed the English girl up a second staircase,

and across a hall to a room which was furnished very simply, and yet cosily, as a school-room. A French lady rose from a seat in the window, and Barbara's introduction to Mademoiselle Vauchamp was supplemented by a whisper as they passed into the adjoining room. "My governess is dying of curiosity to see you. We will go for a walk directly after luncheon—that is, if you like—and you must not let her bore you with questions."

But Gladys felt as if no one in this delightful house could ever bore her.

"Is this your bedroom?" she said to Barbara, looking about the pretty room with its very simple comforts; not a pretence of anything luxurious, although in perfectly good taste.

"Yes; and here," drawing aside a curtain, "this is Violet's dressing-room, and up those two little steps is her bedroom. I never have been farther away from her, except when I go to visit the Barnford Bruces, since mamma died, ten years ago."

"Barnford!" echoed Gladys. "That is where Miss Dymond lives, and where I am going, isn't it?"

"Yes. I hope you will like it. Didn't you think it awfully jolly to have Cousin Ralph's money? Only fancy his picking you out! Oh, we'll have lots to talk about. I'm so interested in America. Lion—that is my cousin Lionel, one of the Barnford Bruces—told me such rubbish. You will see him to-day, and I wish you would tease him about *America*."

Gladys's eyes gave a funny twinkle. "Did he expect me to appear with a tomahawk in my hand?"

Barbara laughed. She was standing at the side of the dressing-table, while Gladys smoothed her hair and pulled out the ruffles in her neck and sleeves.

"I don't think it would have surprised him," Barbara answered. "But perhaps he was only chaffing me. He is next to the eldest of Uncle George's children. There are five boys and only one girl—Mary. I hope Miss Dymond will let you go to their house often, they are so jolly."

"What is she like?" queried Gladys.

Barbara burst into a merry peal of laughter, and shook her hair back lightly. "Oh, don't ask me. Wait until you see her. I only hope, if I go down to Barnford, you'll tell me just what you think of her. She is *such* fun."

"Oh, horrors!" ejaculated Gladys. "Do you mean to say it's as bad as all that? and I've got to stay with her until captain—my guardian—returns to England?"

"Not a doubt of it, unless you write and ask for a ticket-of-leave. That's quoting Lion again. But really it may turn out better than we think."

"I can run away," said Gladys, laughing, yet with an inclination to greater seriousness than she had felt for some time.

Barbara shook her head. "Not from Miss Dymond. You might run as far as old Miss Marchmont's. That wouldn't be a bad idea. Yes, I advise you to try it if you can't stand Dicksie Dymond. That's what papa and Uncle George used to call her when they were boys."

"Oh dear!" said Gladys, piteously, "what *shall* I do?"

Again Barbara laughed. "Suggest giving her all of Uncle Ralph's money for her missionaries."

"Oh, is she that kind?" said Gladys, now positively tragic. "Well, I just give up."

"Don't yet a while, until you have had some fun out of it. As I say, she may not be quite so—well, so *wearing* as she used to be."

They were on their way down-stairs by this time, and just as they neared the drawing-room door Barbara turned back with the merriest sort of a look in her eyes.

"Of one thing *beware*: never mention before Dicksie Dymond one forbidden name."

"What is that?"

"Beresford," said Barbara, in a solemn whisper. "The same house won't hold you after it is spoken."

"Then I'll reserve it for a last resort," answered Gladys, laughing. "I'm glad I know of a weapon of defence. It's better than my tomahawk." But even as she spoke there flashed across her mind a vision of the wistful-eyed girl in the Liverpool railway depot, and the stern-faced gentleman, Ralph Beresford. Were these the Beresfords she was never to mention?

CHAPTER XII.

"MRS. JOHN."

LUNCHEON passed off very pleasantly. Gladys could not fail to remark upon the luxurious sort of simplicity which characterized everything at that meal. There was the most skilful service from a young footman in a sober-colored livery relieved by a waistcoat of red and white, and the dishes were all deliciously cooked. This was a dinner for Barbara and her governess, since the younger sister of the household rarely had an opportunity for dining with its two grown members. Everything was pleasantly informal. She had already explained to Gladys that only when there was no company invited was she allowed to appear at the late dinner. "But we shall be in the drawing-room to-night," she said, "although there is quite a dinner-party. Mademoiselle and I always go down for an hour, and when the ladies come up from the table it is great fun. Every one will want to speak to you, you may be sure."

Gladys was not sure whether this was just what she would like herself, and yet already something in the atmosphere of the house had made her step into the place assigned to girls of her own age in England. She was no doubt a per-

son of great importance, but at the same time, among all her English relations, there was an undefined feeling that until Captain Paget's return her exact position was not fixed, and a doubtful understanding of her American antecedents made them a little watchful and critical of her. Perhaps, for all the sweetness and good-breeding in her manner of making the young stranger feel at home, Miss Bruce would have been just a little better pleased to see Barbara less effusive in her own marks of cordiality and the air of full-grown friendship which she had indicated in various ways. When the door opened upon the figure of a tall, handsome gentleman in a velvet morning-coat, Barbara was in the midst of a smiling, half-whispered confidence to her new friend, and the elder sister was not sorry to make an interruption.

"Richard," she said, quickly, "you have not seen our new cousin, Gladys Ferrol. Gladys, this is my brother Richard."

Mr. Bruce's manner was scarcely less cordial than little Barbara's. He shook hands with Gladys, and then put his hand under the girl's chin, turning her face to the light.

"How like the old portrait of her grandmother!" he exclaimed, while a deep color came into the girlish countenance he was staring down into. It had reminded her of Cousin Bert's fashion of searching in her face for some answer which she had teasingly withheld. "You shall see the picture by-and-by," said Mr. Bruce, taking his place at the table. "I am very busy to-day," he went on; "I have a

model who is rather hard to catch in a very good-humor; but, Violet, bring Gladys into the studio after tea."

"We are going for a walk," said Barbara, "but we shall be home for tea, Violet. Don't be afraid. Did you forget, Dick, that it is Violet's day?"

"No, I didn't," he rejoined. "No visitors for me, if you please. I have old Phillips (my model) groaning in armor, and the light is capital. Not a minute of it can I waste. Well, Mrs. Melrose, are you a first-rate American by this time?" and nodding quizzically at Gladys, Mr. Bruce went on questioning Mrs. Melrose about her American travels, and very good-humoredly covering up the fit of shyness which had seized Gladys. She was glad of the prospect of a walk, even if it did involve the threatened questions from *mademoiselle*.

"Where shall we go?" demanded Barbara, as the gate closed after them.

"To the gardens," said the governess, promptly; and Barbara slipped her hand through Gladys's arm, saying, in a confidential way, "now then, I'll tell you all the streets we pass through, so that you will know the neighborhood."

"Useful if Dicksie Dymond gets unbearable," laughed Gladys. "Imagine me staggering in some evening, having walked all the way from Devonshire."

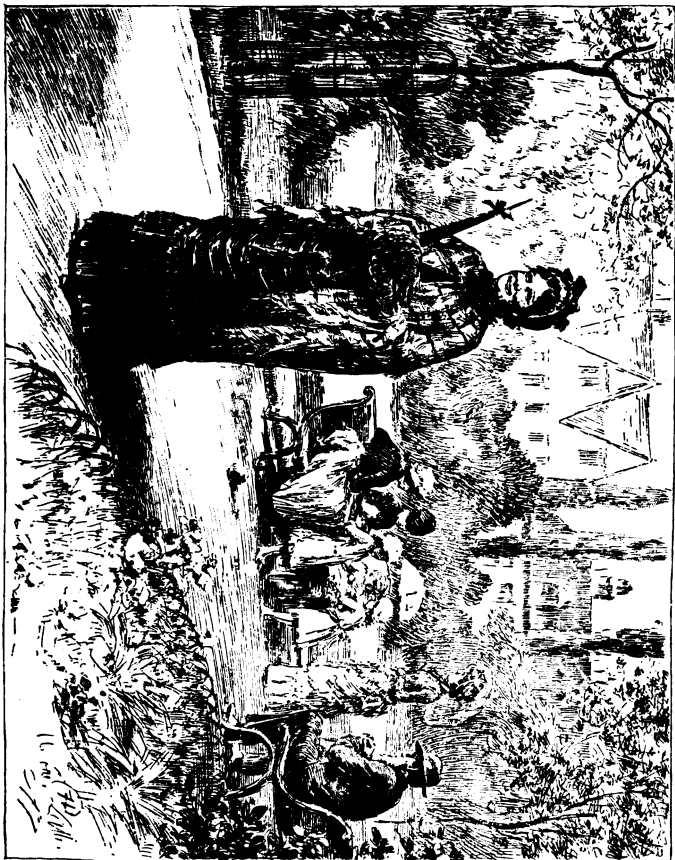
"I'd like to! Well, we'll hope the Bruce boys could protect you, if things came to that. Here is Kensington High Street," as they emerged from what seemed almost like a lane into a long, busy thoroughfare, with shops and houses

on either side, and finally the entrance to some grand old gardens. "Here are the Kensington Gardens, and there is the old red-brick palace where the Queen lived when she was a little girl."

"I know! I know!" cried Gladys; but her interests were in a far more remote period of the old building's history. She was too familiar with Miss Strickland's "Queens of England" not to feel thrilled as they came in view of the red-brick palace, whose walls might have many a tale of royalty to tell. "Mary of Orange lived there. Oh, I wonder which one of all these windows could have belonged to her room? Wasn't it there her husband died, and she tore up so many of her private papers? Oh dear! is it actually the identical place?"

Little Barbara, however, was not quite so enthusiastic or responsive a companion as Gladys would have liked at this, to her, thrilling moment. While they lingered in the broad walk, and Gladys was conjuring up the many scenes she had read of with which the place was associated, Barbara's roving gaze drifted away from the palace whose rows of windows were shining in the September sun, taking in the other objects of every-day life around them, and rested suddenly, with a little exclamation, half amusement, half dismay, on a figure coming smilingly in their direction. It was that of a large, florid-faced woman, very conspicuously attired, with a red plume in her bonnet, and a gayly colored shawl pinned across with a huge cairngorm brooch. She was coming on the broad walk, where she seemed to absorb all

"MRS. JOHN."



the color everywhere about her, and it was evident that she recognized two of the party with deep satisfaction. But when Gladys reluctantly shifted her gaze from the palace the stout lady had taken her in also with her large, smiling glance, although it was mademoiselle to whom she nodded.

She barred the way as the little party came up, and put out a fat hand in a green kid glove to the French lady.

"My good Vauchamp," she exclaimed, in very Anglo-Saxon French, "how do you do? Is this always your promenade? Come, now, introduce me to your little charge. Miss Bruce, is it not?"

Barbara, in spite of her natural love of fun, and anything savoring of an adventure, looked very grave, and seemed not a little annoyed by the woman's manner. But mademoiselle had taken courage, it appeared.

"Yes; it is true, Madame—John," she said, hesitating a little over the name, and looking at the stout lady with much significance. "And this is—Colonel Dymond's niece from America—Mademoiselle Ferrol."

The stranger started, and her florid countenance grew pale for a moment. But she recovered herself quickly, and again the fat green glove was stretched forth. It certainly was no sort of an introduction. Who was she? Mrs. John: that was all mademoiselle had said. But it was difficult for Gladys to gaze motionless at that green-gloved hand, and blushing furiously in her confusion, she laid her own hand in it for as brief a time as possible. The lady's fat fingers closed warmly upon Gladys's.

"We are cousins, my dear," she said, with a loud laugh. "I don't suppose you know it; and you're not likely to see much of us; but I know all about you."

Barbara had made a little impatient movement forward, and mademoiselle rather hastily joined her. So it chanced that Gladys found herself, as she too tried to walk on, side by side with the stout lady, whose color had returned by this time, and who seemed in no haste to leave her American relation.

"Yes, my dear," she continued, "we're cousins, and no denying it. I don't mind you telling Miss Dymond herself as how I said it."

"But—who are you?" cried Gladys, with a feeling of extreme repulsion for this unexpected relative.

"I— What name did mademoiselle say?" The stranger laughed again. "Mademoiselle called me Mrs. John," said the woman, not without an expression of kindness in her large black eyes. They were sharp, inquisitive, and searching eyes, used to taking in everything, and a great deal more than they actually saw, but they were not without some beauty in form and color, although it was twenty years since they had made their owner known as the rustic belle of her native county. She swept Gladys now with this large glance of hers, admiring the girl's trim little figure and the fearless candor of her expression. "Mrs. John," she went on; "that will do for the present. But we're sure to meet again; for I must say, if you *are* an American, and have done me and mine a mean injury— I like your looks, my dear. You

may tell Miss Dymond that too, if you like." And Mrs. John laughed again, though in a lower tone.

"An injury!" cried Gladys, standing still in the broad, shady avenue, and looking the stranger full in the face. "What do you mean? How could I? I never even heard of you before, Mrs.—John!"

It was irritating to have her laugh so often, but this time she laid her hand on Gladys's arm.

"It mightn't just be *your* fault," she said, significantly; "and I ain't a-blaming you, my dear; not but what I *would* do so if you don't see some justice done when you have your money in your own 'ands. There, now, I'm glad I met you and said it out. They won't think of letting you know us; but you mightn't find us such bad friends, after all—and in a strange country too," said the woman, in a compassionate tone. "Maybe the day'll come when you'll feel glad of friends as are downright plain sort of people. There are Beresfords down in Devonshire—" She was continuing, but she broke off suddenly.

"Are you a Beresford?" said Gladys, trembling a little, and moving her arm politely away from the heavy touch of the green gloves.

"Well, no," was the answer. "I'm—didn't mademoiselle say it?—Mrs. John."

Barbara had turned around now, and she came up nearer the two, looking at the stranger with curiosity and yet aversion. The red plume, and the gay shawl, and the cairngorm brooch offended her eye, trained to the artistic colors and

habiliments such as were known to Morpeth Lodge. Still, vulgar as the woman certainly was, there was something kindly, or meant to be so, in her large coarse face. She looked from one to the other of the two girls—from the soft, subdued elegance of Barbara's costume, the broad-brimmed hat with its gray plumes, the little gray wrap just warm enough, and yet not even autumnal in its weight—one of those garments which mark more than any other the sense of fitness, and at the same time capacity of the wearer's wardrobe—to Gladys's fine fresh garments and her bright, anxious face. Something just a trifle sad stole into Mrs. John's black eyes as they noted the indefinable touches about the two girls which betokened their advantages of fortune and training.

"I'd give sixpence to have you know my Sarah!" she cried, suddenly, looking at Gladys. "Perhaps it'll come about, and you won't be sorry. There, I'm off now, mademoiselle. I'll be glad to tell the captain I met you, and the young ladies too. Good-by, my dear. Don't forget you saw me. The day may come—"

She gave Gladys's arm another friendly pressure, and then, turning away, hurried down a side pathway, where presently the last gleam of her red plume and the heavy shawl vanished among the trees.

"Mrs. John!" cried Gladys, turning around upon mademoiselle. "Who is she, please? My *cousin*, too, so she said."

Mademoiselle looked very pale. "Yes, but it is nothing," she said, trying to laugh. "I knew her and her husband in

Paris. Come, mademoiselle, let us go on. I don't want to talk about—Mrs. John. She was right: you are not to know her."

But the walk had been robbed of its charm for Gladys. That something lay in the background connected with Colonel Dymond's legacy to herself she felt very sure. In spite of her honest aversion to this stranger, there was the ring of truth in some of her words, and Gladys already believed that her own great good-fortune had been other people's misery. Could it be that "Sarah" was the girl she had seen in Liverpool? But no; child as she was, and unversed in the story of human nature, Gladys felt very sure that there was no link of kinship between this loud-voiced, black-eyed woman and that shabbily dressed, lady-like girl. Mrs. John had spoken of Beresfords in Devonshire, and Barbara had said it was a name never to be mentioned to Miss Dymond. How could she solve the mystery? thought the young girl, while she walked on only half listening to Barbara's gay chatter, or mademoiselle's questions about America. If only Cousin Bert were here! But he was not, and Gladys had not yet any feeling of near enough kinship to seek advice from her new cousins. It was her first experience of life—her first encounter with any problem which she had to put away in her mind unsolved, and had she but known it, it was but the precedent for many another.

CHAPTER XIII.

A FAIRY GODMOTHER.

IT was hard for Gladys to feel composed during their walk home, and yet she could not say much to her companions about "Mrs. John," for it was evident neither made-moiselle nor Barbara wished to discuss her. There was, however, plenty to occupy the girls as soon as they were at home again. A cheerful murmur of voices, sounds of laughing and talking in the drawing-room, reached them as they made their way up-stairs, and Barbara was impatient to be among the guests, fulfilling her coveted duty of handing the teacups about, and saying a word here and there with her sister's grown-up friends. Perhaps it was true that little Barbara was not quite like the English girl of story-book life whom Gladys had expected. Left an orphan so young, and growing up at her elder sister's side, she had been allowed a great deal of freedom and many privileges; but yet there was the real English *childishness* about her too—no conscious idea that her fifteen years meant importance or dignity; and she knew well enough how far she could go even in that matter of the Wednesday "afternoons." Winifred Beresford no doubt led a more conventional and in one sense

“proper” life in the gloom and dulness of the Tor House than did the academician’s little sister among the light and luxury of Morpeth Lodge; and yet both were typical in their way, and I think Gladys Ferrol, with her sense of independence fostered now or aggravated by Mrs. Melrose’s lengthy homilies, came in between the two.

The girls went into the drawing-room with a very quiet and subdued manner. The tea-table was set near the chimney-piece, and Miss Bruce was already filling cups for the half dozen callers who sat about chatting in the easy, softly modulated tones which Gladys had begun to realize as thoroughly English. A tall boy of perhaps sixteen was lounging in the window recess, pulling out this book and that from the shelves, and Barbara, with a low-uttered exclamation of “There is Lion,” drew Gladys over, and went through the introduction to Lionel Bruce with much precision. A frank, manly face was lifted to Gladys’s, and a hearty shake of the hand expressed the boy’s welcome, but Miss Bruce’s voice disturbed them.

“Gladys,” she was saying, “will you come here, my dear? There is a lady—an old friend of your grandmother’s—”

And Gladys, coming forward, saw a little old lady, queerly dressed, looking like a bundle of silk and laces, make a movement on her chair, and she was conscious of a pair of bead-like eyes fastened upon her. The old lady put out a bony hand fairly blazing with jewels, and bestowed a sort of wrinkled smile upon the American descendant of Gladys Dymond. She could remember this girl’s English grandmother when

she was the same age—a slip of a girl full of queer fancies and impulses, which the lady thought had accounted for her marrying an American, and it gave the old woman a pang, after all these years, to have another Gladys standing before her with the same slim uprightness of figure, and the same clear gray eyes and softly waving chestnut hair. It almost seemed to Lady Marchmont as if *she* had been the only one to grow old and sad and lonely.

“Dear! dear!” said the old lady, holding Gladys’s firm little hand in hers; “the likeness to—the other one—is wonderful. My dear, your grandmother and I were girls together. Yes. I don’t wonder Ralph Dymond was interested in you. You know,” she added, turning to Miss Bruce, “he talked it all over with me. There was only one thing—” Miss Bruce gave a queer sort of glance at the visitor—half remonstrance, half supplication. Lady Marchmont, however, was not one of those who like warning glances or interruptions of any kind. “I was only going to speak of that Beresford affair,” she said, a little shortly, putting it in a way that was far more annoying to Miss Bruce than anything she would have said without the little look of alarm on Violet’s face. “Of course, Letitia Dymond—”

“Will you take some more tea, Lady Marchmont?” said Violet Bruce, pretending not to have heard the last words. Lady Marchmont had drawn Gladys into a seat on the little divan, one end of which she filled, small as she was, with her ruffles of silk and her wide lace-trimmed mantilla.

“Yes, Violet, I think I will,” said her ladyship, with a sort

of chuckle, for even if she resented being silenced, she could not fail to be amused by it all. Lady Marchmont enjoyed the life coming and going about her very much as an audience do a play upon the stage. She was not at all heartless, although to some people she seemed so, for she had had many sore trials in life; but somehow her knowledge of life had made her just a trifle cynical, and apt to doubt people's good intentions. She would say in her odd way that when people went to the theatre they took comedy or tragedy, just as the case might be, and enjoyed each in turn without believing much in any of it; and so, she averred, she accepted the life going on in *her* little world; but that she had a really kind heart no one who watched her talking to-day to little Gladys Ferrol could have doubted. "Poor lonely little heiress," Lady Marchmont was saying to herself. "I wonder how she is going to manage among all the crowd of people whom she finds herself suddenly related to? What an honest, bright face the child has! I don't see that you are so *very* American, my dear," the old lady said, in her kindest tones.

"But I like to be very American," said Gladys, smiling, but coloring with her feeling of roused pride. "I only hope I'll feel just as American as I ever can when the—years are up."

Lady Marchmont laughed. "So you are going to take it that way, are you, my dear? Serve your time among us, and then run away back to America."

Gladys nodded her head with a very sage expression. "Yes—ma'am—Lady Marchmont," she said, in a low voice,

confused about the title for a moment, although, singular to say, this queer little old lady was the first of all the strangers with whom she felt thoroughly at home. "I know that as long as it is all English money—I mean the fortune—I'll have to spend part of the time over here. Cousin Bert said that would be only *right*, but I can have two homes, you know. The voyage is nothing," said Gladys, with the superiority of a good sailor. Lady Marchmont laughed outright; but her amusement, it was evident, was all friendly.

"My dear," she said, patting the girl's hand with her own jewelled fingers, "you have it all arranged, I see, and you certainly have a mind of your own. That is a good thing, as I don't suppose you'd have a very happy time of it among them all if you were too easily led. And pray tell me, who is this Cousin Bert?"

"He is my very best friend," said Gladys, warmly. Ought she to say "Lady Marchmont" every time? the girl wondered. "He took me when my parents died, and did *everything* for me. He lives in the homestead at Harringford. And there is Cousin Lois too, and Aunt Sarah. They all love me dearly," the girl added, impressively, and looking at her new friend with eyes that betrayed her deeper feeling.

Every one knew that Lady Marchmont was a keen, searching judge of human nature, and however cold or sarcastic she might appear to the world in general, she appreciated sincerity when she met with it. She understood in a moment just what Gladys's words really meant; that the girl

felt herself strange among people who had only kindness and good-nature, but no love yet to give her, and she was woman of the world enough to know that the great inheritance might only be a barrier between the young girl and genuine sympathy and affection. She liked Gladys's candor and proudly asserted Americanism, or perhaps she liked the idea that it would be an aggravation to old Miss Dymond. And then that other Gladys, her companion of five-and-forty years ago, had often looked at her in just that soft and beseeching yet proud way. Lady Marchmont hardly liked to admit to herself that she was so drawn towards the young stranger.

"I suppose I am an old fool," she thought, while Gladys was taking in every line of her face—the sallow complexion which had once been a beautiful pale olive, the sharply cut features, twinkling dark eyes, and the remarkable "front" of brown curls and frizettes which showed under the old lady's dark green satin bonnet. Altogether she was the most interesting figure in Gladys's new world, where already so many impressions had been made that it is no wonder the girl felt taken out of herself, confused and bewildered. Just why she felt an inclination to talk of home to her, Gladys could not have said, but the words seemed to be trembling on her lips.

"My dear," the old lady said, presently, "I shall like to hear all about your American people, and your home. I know it is nice, because you are a little lady yourself, my dear. Now I know you don't want to sit here chatting

to an old woman like me. There are Barbara and Lionel Bruce making eyes at you ; so run away."

"But I like to talk to you," said Gladys, timidly. It was strange what a friendly feeling the queer, sarcastic little old lady had inspired in the girl. She was perfectly honest in saying she liked talking to her, and there came a look into Lady Marchmont's face which softened it wonderfully.

"My dear," she said, again putting out her thin old hand to take the warm young fingers in her own, "I believe you. Yes, I do. Keep that honest look in your eyes and that honest feeling in your heart, and you need not be afraid to face any of them. I should like to be your friend, and I mean to know you a great deal better some of these days. If I had seen you six months ago, I don't think I would have declined Arthur Paget's request that you should have come to me until his return."

"Oh!" cried Gladys, "did he want you to take me?"

The old lady nodded. "Yes, but I said I was too old to be fidgeted by a silly American girl. However, some of these days we may know more of each other, and you and I can have long talks. People will tell you I'm a cold-hearted old termagant, and perhaps I am; but you needn't believe all they say."

Gladys laughed, and then said, very shyly, "Do you know what you make me think of, ma'am?"

"No indeed. What?"

"A fairy godmother," said Gladys, softly.

Lady Marchmont laughed until the plumes in her green satin bonnet quivered all over.



GLADYS AND HER "FAIRY GODMOTHER."



"Upon my word, I don't know how to take that," she said, wiping her eyes on the beautiful old Mechlin lace handkerchief that she carried in a little bag on her arm. "Fairy godmothers may be crabbed-looking old things on a broomstick, you know. But I'll tell you one thing, my dear. Sometimes, as you may have read, the princesses that were the most richly endowed were often glad enough to call on their fairy godmothers when they were in trouble; and so, if you choose to consider me one, I shall be very happy to prove of service to you."

Gladys smiled with delight. It did not occur to her to be afraid of this old lady; indeed, she did not think of her as in any way old or "crabbed," and it pleased her to have her little fun sympathized with so readily.

"Very well, ma'am," she said, nodding her head; "I'm not a very fine princess, but I won't forget I have a fairy godmother. I wish we could do like the real fairy-tale people."

"How so?" said her new friend, with twinkling eyes.

"Why, have you endow me with all sorts of gifts, you know."

"Wait and see," said the old lady, entering into the spirit of it all most good-humoredly. And as Gladys had to leave her, she said, with a final sympathetic pressure of her hand, "I won't lose sight of you, and I am glad to be able to write and tell Arthur Paget that I have seen you."

"That is a remarkably fine girl we have among us, my dear," she was saying a few moments later to Miss Bruce.

"I'm very sorry I refused to take her myself until Arthur's return."

Violet's eyes wandered across the room to where Gladys was standing talking to Lionel and Barbara in the little recess. No one could tell how relieved she felt that Gladys was not a genuine little savage, and she answered her old friend heartily, "She *is* very nice, if only she isn't spoiled. But, Lady Marchmont, Arthur wrote that he particularly wanted to keep her away from all those Beresfords, and I suppose we must respect his wishes."

"As long as we don't know hers," said Lady Marchmont, grimly. "But let me tell you one thing, my dear Violet, that girl has a head of her own and a mind of her own, or I'm a very poor judge of human nature."

"You know more of it than all the people in London put together," asserted Miss Violet.

"Perhaps so," agreed Lady Marchmont, with another quiver of her rich plumes. "At all events, I know enough to believe that this girl has an honest heart, and will go straight ahead and do what she thinks right, all the Arthur Pagets in the world to the contrary. And how like my old companion she is!" cried the old lady, softly—"that little proud and sweet look in the eyes, and the quick, impulsive way of speaking. It is Gladys Dymond all over again."

Most of Miss Bruce's visitors had departed by this time, and the hostess stood up.

"We were to go to the studio after tea," Richard said,"

she announced, "to show Gladys Ferrol her grandmother's portrait. Will you come, Lady Marchmont, and all of you? Come, young people," she added, in a higher key. And Gladys started, while Barbara exclaimed,

"Oh, the studio!—yes. Come, Gladys."

But Lady Marchmont shook her head. "My dear," she whispered, getting up and shaking out her ruffles and laces, "I must be off. Seeing the girl has been all I can stand for one day. I'll go home now, and no doubt live all the past over again. But I wish I had not been so quick to say no to Arthur Paget."

CHAPTER XIV.

SARAH.

AS Barbara and Gladys were hastening homeward, Mrs. John, in a suburban omnibus, was going in the exactly opposite direction. She was hardly less excited, or, as she would have put it, "frustrated," than Gladys by their unexpected meeting; but she regarded it as such a piece of luck and good-fortune that it turned the drift of her plans entirely: instead of going on to see a cousin who was in business in the city, she decided to return home and talk things over with the family. She might have taken the underground railway and have saved time, but she had no objection to the long ride in the omnibus, away out of Kensington towards Tooting.

She had a great deal to think over even after she got "cooled down," and she who a week before had called the American heiress of Colonel Dymond's money by every name suggestive of aborigines, Africans, or barbarians, was forced to confess that Gladys Ferrol looked every inch a lady. Mrs. John, as it may be inferred, liked gay colors and a conspicuous style of dress, yet the refinement about the two girls had not failed to impress her; and although she

was very proud of her own Sarah's fine color and dashing ways, she admitted the claims to attractiveness in Gladys and Barbara, although the latter, she said to herself, looked too old for that "silly" kind of dress, and to have her hair floating down her back in such a fashion. But it was such pretty hair!

There had been only one fair-haired child in Mrs. John's family, and she was the stricken one, the cripple; and the poor woman thought of this other girl—Bruce's sister, as she called her—with her free, vigorous step and her piquant face; and she sighed in her corner of the omnibus, wondering why things were so unevenly balanced in this busy, weary world. Perhaps Mrs. John did not reflect, as she might have done, on the folly of all the castles which so many people had built in expectation of the colonel's money, nor think that if Captain John had done differently, life would have presented an easier problem to her and hers to solve. Like most of us, she grumbled at results, and forgot causes altogether; but she was a woman with a great deal of pluck and energy, and this encounter with the fortunate one among them all had given an impetus to her thoughts, and a motive for plans and schemes which made the long ride seem like nothing to her.

The omnibus put her down in a suburban district, where town and country merged agreeably for those who have a friendly feeling for nature, and yet a taste for solid bricks and mortar. There was a wide rural road, with a distance of meadow or green, and the outlines of some graceful trees

showing against a sky that was just beginning to herald the sunset ; and apart from this, and something like a centre of shops, and a market-place, and town-hall, or school building, was what was known as "The Common"—a stretch of green, around which houses of various degrees of shabby gentility were ranged, a space at one end dominating the rest by reason of a fine walled garden and a house of some pretensions to grandeur, while on the opposite turning was a church and a quiet, sleepy-looking rectory.

Mrs. John and Sarah would have preferred living among the shops in the animated portion of Westham, as this region was called, but the captain preferred a certain degree of seclusion ; and so one of the smallest of the little brick houses in the row had been taken, furnished, a year before, and to its gate-way Mrs. John was now directing her steps. She smiled comfortably as she opened the front door with her key, and stood in the little stuffy passage-way, wondering where "he" or Sarah was. There was a strong odor of cooking in the house. Sarah was getting a hot tea ready, and the fumes of the bacon were by no means ungrateful to her mother as she pushed open the door of the family sitting-room—a small parlor with one dingily curtained window looking out on the common. Mrs. John's second floor was let, which accounted for the fact that the family worked and ate and enjoyed life generally in this one room, and it also explained the stuffiness and disorder. The horse-hair sofa, the various chairs, and the two tables were in a curious state of dilapidation ; but the family seemed to take it cheerfully, on



"MRS. JOHN" AT HOME.

the whole, since so little effort at any repairing was ever made.

There was a tea-cloth on the centre-table now, and Sarah's sewing, which had littered it a short time before, was huddled into the corner of the sofa, odd bits of silk and lace flung down together, a bonnet-frame hanging on the back of a chair near by, and a paper pattern flying from the back of another, where it had been caught on with a pin. There were pictures on the walls, but the chimney-piece presented an array of ornaments by no means unworthy a place in just such a room, and one end was reserved for the pipes and the tobacco of the master of the house, who also had his large easy-chair at the corner of the fireside.

Mrs. John wasted no time or sighs over the familiar disorder of the room, but she laid aside her bonnet and shawl before going out into the kitchen, where the bacon was frying and the kettle boiling, presided over by two girls, the one fair and delicate-looking, and showing in her attitude more than by any lines of deformity her partial helplessness. She was seated near a table, with her two books and some writing materials at hand, but she had been watching the kettle while the other girl went back and forth with the necessary articles for the tea-table. This second girl was in direct contrast to the one at the table. She was tall and brisk, and in spite of what her mother called a "lovely figure," rather inclined to be stout, and she had bright red cheeks, and snapping black eyes, and a profusion of very much crimped and wavy brown hair. Every movement in-

licated the girl's character, which was quick, active, and independent, and as she went back and forth she had time for talking, and darting glances out of the window, and seeing everything that went on around the Common.

"Law!" was her exclamation, as her mother's figure appeared in the little kitchen. "Well, where did *you* come from? I thought you were going to take supper with the Pounces."

"Well, so I was," said Mrs. John; "but I changed my mind. No, I won't sit down, Rosamond Jane, until I change my dress. I've had an adventure, I tell you. You might think for a week and you'd never put a name to it."

"Then we won't try," said brisk Miss Sarah, laughing, and giving the bacon a turn. "Just tell us, ma, do."

"Well, I met that American girl, Gladys Ferrol, the colonel's heiress."

"No!" Sarah moved back a step or two in her astonishment, and stared at her mother with wide-open eyes, while Mrs. John related the scene in the gardens, deciding, however, to sit down when her excitement became overpowering.

"Now, Sarah," she continued, "I've a plan working in my 'ead, and we'll see what your pa thinks of it. It's my belief this girl will see *justice* done those as has suffered through that cruel old man. Mind your father's bit of the bacon, my dear. We mustn't make him cross at the start."

Sarah shook the pan energetically, and in a few moments

the supper was ready, and Mrs. John went up to summon the captain.

"She must be nice, or mother wouldn't think so," said Rosamond Jane, lifting her face from her books. "I wonder what the plan is?"

"I think I know," answered the elder sister. "I only hope pa won't spoil everything."

There was a step in the parlor, and Mrs. John's voice saying, "'Ere's your father, girls," hastened the last preparations for the supper, and brought Sarah and Rosamond Jane into the little parlor for the evening meal.

A large though worn-looking man, with iron-gray whiskers and a pair of watery blue eyes, was seated in the arm-chair which he had drawn up to his own place at the table. Two small boys had made their appearance, and as, with Sarah and Rosamond, this represented the household, the meal began promptly. The captain had already been told of his wife's meeting with Gladys, and the alert Sarah fairly rushed into the subject.

"*Quite* lady-like, ma says," said Sarah, with a toss of her head. Sarah was seventeen, and except for the son Algeron, who was in an attorney's office in the city, the eldest of the family, and as such permitted to express her opinions freely. But she knew better than to talk over any of her mother's plans until a more fitting moment. Still she could not keep away from the fascinating topic, and the captain was well enough pleased to discuss it.

"She has only three years and a half to wait for the full

use of her money," he said, in a pompous manner, which his family admired, "and if she's like most American girls of fifteen, she's old for her years."

"What ever's in your 'ead now, John?" said his wife, anxiously. It was evident that the captain also had plans, and the mother wished to have them work well with hers.

"Never mind," said the captain. "I'm thinking out how I can manage something before Paget turns up, that's all, and I don't want any nonsense about it either."

"I'm sure *we're* not going to have any nonsense about the girl at all," cried Sarah; "not but what ma and me may make our plans too; and isn't it better to talk things right out?"

"Hold your tongue, Sarah," said her mother, angrily. "How do you know what your father may want us to do? One thing I can say for sure, and that is, she's a nice-spoken girl, and with as frank an eye as ever looked any one in the face."

The captain filled his glass and laughed grimly. "I don't care for her eye," he said, "as long as I can get her ear. I want her to hear a few words of plain truth before next July."

Sarah shrugged her shoulders with a little aggravating smile. "Ma and me have our plans, all the same," she said, with the freedom of a young person not accustomed to being put down.

The captain went out for a walk after tea, with the two little boys, Paget and Dymond, on either side of his tall mili-

tary figure; and when the table was cleared, Sarah brought back her work and Rosamond Jane her books. The little cripple was looked up to as a genius in the family because she was so devoted to reading. But Sarah was the moving power in the household. She sat in the lamp-light, after her father came in and the boys had been sent to bed, stitching and pinning together the very showy-looking bonnet which she intended to wear in a day or two at Kew, to which resort she was going with some country cousins now in town, and she betrayed by sundry little jerks of the head and screwing up of the mouth, as her work progressed, that her mind was as busy as her fingers. It was, however, only when the captain, as was usual with him of an evening, had gone up-stairs for a little chat with their lodger, that she condescended to open her mind to her mother and sister. There was always some sewing going on in the establishment, and Mrs. John had the breadths of an old silk in her hands, which she was turning for Sarah's benefit.

"Ma," said that young lady, when the captain's step was heard overhead, "you may as well speak out, and say you mean me to go down to Exeter."

Mrs. John lifted her flushed face to her daughter's. Sarah's eyes and cheeks were glowing in the lamp-light, and Rosamond Jane too was eagerly waiting for her mother's answer. Mrs. John drew a deep breath and looked all around the dingy room, her glance coming back with satisfaction to the girlish face opposite her, lifted from the little pile of silks and laces, and certainly, in spite of its being so strongly

colored, not without a certain beauty of its own—the same kind of beauty as that which, five-and-twenty years before, had made Mrs. John's fortune for her.

"Well, my dear," the mother said, smiling upon her girls, "that's just about it. I suppose we may as well talk it over."

And so it came about that before Colonel Dymond's little heiress had been thirty-six hours in England, four entirely different households had been thrown into a condition of perplexity or agitation about her, and all because she was so unlike what they had expected! Things had been allowed to quiet down before she arrived, lulled by the idea that there was no use at all in looking for anything from "an American;" but this had all been changed in a flash by the girl's appearance among her new friends. Ralph Beresford, it is true, had regarded her quiet girlishness and simplicity as an additional aggravation, although it had set his little daughter's hopes spinning again; the Bruces had found all their surprise over the colonel's will turned into satisfaction, which Violet tempered with caution, more from innate English reserve than anything else; old Lady Marchmont, in her little house in Park Lane Square, spent an excited evening, just as she had declared she would, looking over old letters and memorials of the past; and Mrs. John and her family, in the little stuffy parlor at Westham Common, were thrilled and taken out of themselves by the "plan" which the mother and her daughters discussed until the captain joined them again.

Of all those who were interested in the American girl's arrival, the one whom it most immediately concerned took it with the least show of excitement, or, indeed, I might say, interest. This was old Miss Dymond, who was to send her own maid for Gladys on the morrow.

"I am not going to change any of my ways for her, Perkins," that lady had said on the afternoon Gladys met Lady Marchmont. "And I wish, when you are bringing her down here, you'd let her know we don't like anything new-fangled."

"Meaning those American sort of ideas, ma'am, I suppose?" said Mrs. Perkins, in answer.

CHAPTER XV.

THE PRIORY.

"I DON'T like to say no, my darling, and yet suppose your father should not like it?"

"But, mamma," cried Janey, "what harm can there be in our going to Barnford or to Mrs. Cleve's shop? And besides, he need never know."

"But, Janey dear, you know both of you will be on the lookout for Gladys Ferrol."

"I know it," said Winifred, laughing, and putting her arm about her mother's neck coaxingly. "And where is the harm? We shall only see her drive up from the station in the old Dymond chariot; she will not know us, and we shall have the fun of seeing her. As for telling papa, it's horrid to do anything on the sly, I know, but, mamma dear, we would go in to Mrs. Cleve's to-morrow if we didn't to-day, and you know you said yourself there was no need of telling him about the work, just to make him unhappy. When he sees the children with decent boots, and knows that in winter we can keep a fire here in the dining-room, perhaps he will be satisfied that we earned some money in such a quiet way."

Mrs. Beresford could oppose no answer to such arguments as these, and indeed she did not try. Winifred had a decided gift with her fingers, and she had finished two pieces of work for Mrs. Cleve, who had the "Berlin Bazaar" in the Barnford High Street, and the result, they hoped, would be seventeen shillings, which were to be laid by at once for those necessities of life which the poor woman had too long seen her little flock without.

It was three o'clock on the day that Gladys Ferrol was expected at Miss Dymond's. A walk of two miles and a half was nothing to the Beresford girls, with so much in prospect, and they started off, leaving their mother at her sewing in the dull dining-room of the Tor House, which was parlor and sitting-room combined, their faces bright with expectation, and their steps ready to fly down the quiet village street. After a few moments of watching them, however, from the window, Mrs. Beresford rose and crossed the room to her husband's study. It seemed to her as though she ought to make some reparation for the innocent deception she was allowing her girls to practise upon their father. It was not possible to refuse them such a simple gratification as watching from the friendly shelter of Mrs. Cleve's shop-window the heiress arrive in Barnford, but she well knew that in his eyes even taking any pleasure in such a thing, being in any degree amused by it, would be a criminal sort of disloyalty. He had no sympathy whatever with their youth and the natural instincts of their age. What he could bear or put up with they ought to share

without a murmur; and so the melancholy man led his life of seclusion and gloom, nursing his wrath against everybody connected with Colonel Dymond, and resenting even the light-heartedness which, in spite of so much that was depressing, none of his young people could subdue. Since Arthur's defection Winifred had been her father's chief amanuensis, and Mrs. Beresford, entering the study now with her roll of sewing, the stockings whose huge darns he declared often were the most ostentatious sign of their poverty, had to explain the girls' absence on this sunshiny afternoon as best she might.

"The girls have been so shut up lately, Ralph," she said, coming up to the table where he sat with a pile of finely written sheets before him, "and it was such a nice day I let them walk over to Barnford."

"Why do you come to tell me of it?" he said, lifting his thin handsome face from his work, and looking at his wife with an air of injured surprise. "Am I a tyrant, Jean, who would keep my girls perpetually under lock and key? I do not understand you. When have I refused fresh air and the necessary exercise for either lungs or limbs among my children?"

He waited for a suitable reply, but Mrs. Beresford could find nothing more fitting than a smile and a caressing movement of her hand upon his shoulder.

"I know, dear," she said. "Will you not let me take Winny's place and help you?"

"There is where you are so illogical!" he exclaimed, pee-

vishly. "You cannot take her place. No woman ever states a thing reasonably. She has begun to copy the book in her fine clear hand, and you mustn't come in with your tall angular characters!"

"I thought there might be some notes to make," she explained, with perfect good-humor, and sitting down by the table. "Perhaps you would like to read aloud to me?"

"There you have said something reasonable. All women, I suppose, are alike. I see traces of this extreme lack of logic even in Winifred. As for Janey, she is a young whirlwind. I expect nothing but chaos ever from her sentences." The mother, listening, smiled, bending her sweet face lower over the stockings. "But I am striving to make something of Winifred, for she has a fine, original mind, and she cannot, happily, desert me, like Arthur, just in my hour of need."

Mrs. Beresford wisely said nothing, and presently the tones of her husband's voice began to fill the room as he read his essay on Milton aloud to the gentlest and most patient of critics.

People who were interested in the Beresfords said it was a pity that with all his real talent Ralph Beresford had so little idea of the appropriate in the subjects he selected; but it was impossible to influence him, and he preferred poverty and rare chances of publication to yielding one inch of his own opinion. So he wrote essays on themes well worn by far greater pens, and poems in blank verse about the heroes of the past in Addisonian style, ignoring all the forms of

modern thought and verse, as well as the fact of anything that was popular in the literature of his own times. He had been his children's only instructor, which accounted for the fact that Winifred, and even Janey—the little “whirlwind,” as he called her—had read Virgil in the original and Schiller in German long ago; and even Donald, who cared more for fishing in the streams in Barnford Manor woods than any sort of study, knew his Euripides like any Winchester fifth-form boy when he was only fourteen. The general reading of the household was of a character calculated to send a shock into most families. The girls had analyzed all the people of the Bible long ago, and had read the “Inferno” of Dante and all of the “Spectator,” the “Letters of Lord Chesterfield to his Son,” “Froissart's Chronicles,” and Percy's “Reliques,” as most young people did Scott and Dickens and Miss Yonge, but it had not injured their taste for lighter literature or for out-door sports. Even little Roy, the baby of the family, and who was certainly the cleverest of all Mr. Beresford's children, knew how to enjoy a thoroughly boyish romp when he had a chance for it, although he too was “well up” in heroes of ancient days, and was beginning to understand what Latin meant.

The girls very speedily left Little Barnford village in the distance. It was a soft September day; the sun was warm and hazy, although away to the west were some rain-clouds, yet they were not afraid of a little rain, and the roads were fine all the way to the larger town, and Janey carried a basket for some of the wild flowers still coloring the hedge-rows.



WINIFRED AND JANEY.

They took their way near to where the Barn River ran in and out, with its level banks and irregular bordering of pollards and willows, and where Donald had declared that signs of an otter had recently been seen.

"Then you may be sure," said Winifred, to whom Janey now repeated this information; "the Bruce boys will all be out after it, with Mr. Marchmont."

"And do you suppose they'll take her?" queried Janey.

"Oh, if she's anything of a walker, I suppose so," said Winifred, with a sigh. An otter-hunt, which was Donald's greatest delight, was also her ambition, and there would have been no fear of her being a laggard on the chase, although of course she could not go into the water like the boys.

"They will take her and let her see some of the fun, anyway, I don't doubt," she continued; "but of course she'll have to keep clear of the water. And perhaps they'll all go to breakfast in Rollis as Mr. Marchmont's party did last year. That must have been such fun! Wouldn't you like to get up at half-past five and go off to the river, and then get breakfast in Mrs. Kee's at ten o'clock?" Anything involving a little change and excitement would have been welcomed by both of the girls. The fact of this expedition, tame as it might be, compared to an otter-hunt at daybreak and breakfast in an unusual place and at a queer hour, gave an exhilaration to their footsteps, and brought a smile into Winifred's soft dark eyes. She could not resist giving a little half-unconscious swing to her head and shoulders as they walked, and she sang while they had one of the hilly

lanes to themselves. The girl had a lovely voice—clear and high and sweet, but her singing was done chiefly out-of-doors, for Mr. Beresford went as near to disliking music as any one could. She had an opportunity, however, of some practice in a church choral society, and they were all busy now rehearsing “The Messiah” for next Christmas, and bits of the Hallelujah chorus were constantly interfering with her work in her father’s study. It was in her head and on her lips and in her feet, in the whole pretty, swinging movement of her body now as they half ran down this lane—the last bit of their walk; and when they came to a stand-still, and the young girl lifted her face to the heavens, feeling that delicious charm of happy wind and weather, of blue sky and green flowering earth, of youthful blood coursing in her veins, and this irrepressible magic gift of song, it was hard to realize that there was anything dull or gloomy waiting for her at home.

“Come,” said Janey, who was generally practical when Winifred got lost in the clouds, “there is the town, and we must hurry. It is four o’clock, Winnie.”

“So it is,” said the other; “but oh, Janey, isn’t it lovely to be *alive*?”

“Sometimes,” said Janey. “I wish,” she added, “I could sing like you, Winifred, and I wouldn’t mind anything one bit. I’d go away, like Arthur, and study.”

“My dear!—no you wouldn’t. Don’t you know girls *can’t*? we just have to *stand* it,” said Winifred, with sweeping philosophy. “And so it’s a pity sometimes, if we’re

clever. And you *are* clever, Janey—you and Roy. Even papa admits that.”

But Janey shrugged her shoulders. She would have been better pleased to have some gift, like Winifred’s for singing, which should be a vent for her feelings, for her quick, imaginative temperament. It is hard to be a whirlwind in a cupboard, which was very much little Janey’s condition in life. All sorts of fine things were often in her mind—queer impossible longings for study and travel, for events and adventures in life—and there was no means of even venting them in words, unless in hours of confidential talk with Winifred or Don.

If she could only stand still on such a day as this in the open air and sing! *That* would send her pulses throbbing, or to feel really alive. But Janey did not believe in the chance of a “voice” for herself. She had shrunk back into the farthest row of the altos in the church choral, afraid to lift her voice, although, as she said often to herself, the music “went all over her.” The curate and the rector had often watched Ralph Beresford’s daughters when they had these rehearsals, wondering where the girls got all their fire and movement and energy. They seemed to rush away out of the gloom of the old house, out of its poverty and melancholy, and to have the walk and carriage of young Atlantes, and the fervor of musical geniuses. But everybody knew Ralph Beresford would have resented any “interest” being taken in his girls; and indeed, except when he saw that Janey was a young “whirlwind,” he had no consciousness

of the vitality, the gayety, and the vigor which kept them alive.

"We mustn't run down this last hill," said Winifred. "Don't you think Barnford looks pretty from here? I love this view." And the two girls stopped on the brow of a hill, sweeping the familiar country with their glances, not aware that they were looking at one of the most beautiful landscapes in England, yet unconsciously coming to the decision which wiser and more travelled critics would have reached.

The town lay before them, encompassed by a country richly fertile, and yet dignified by hills on the one side and a coast line with red and blue-gray rocks upon the other. There were new streets and a pretty square and market-place in Barnford, but the older portions of the town dominated the view. Standing still on this sunshiny September afternoon, they could see away up the irregular old High Street, with its quaint court-house and projecting houses, its gabled roofs and two-storied balconies, like a bit out of their beloved Froissart, to the cool depths of the Priory Woods that skirted the distance, and made an imposing background for the principal house of the neighborhood — a rambling, romantic-looking pile, with gracious windows curved and bowed, a flower-garden like the illustration to some mediæval poem, and a yew-walk, solemn and stately, reaching from the Terraces away to what was known as the "Maze" and "My Lady's Garden."

It was well known in Little Barnford that this old Priory *was the last purchase* Colonel Dymond had made, and if so

of course it would belong to his heiress ; and closed and lonely as it was now, and familiar in every curve and turret to the Beresford girls, they could not help, on this day so eventful in Gladys Ferrol's life, looking at it again with a new interest.

The peculiar character of the country—something of its ever subtle fascination, its mingling of brightness and melancholy, its half evasive and wholly captivating charm—seemed to be centred in the old place, to find expression in those deep green woodlands, in the wide stretch of meadows, even in the solemn archway of the yew-walk, and all of Winifred's or Janey's love of romance was fired by the thought that Gladys Ferrol, this strange American girl, might be coming to wake the long closed and deserted place into life—a modern Sleeping Beauty who should have all things at her command when the magic words were spoken.

The girls looked away from the Priory to that part of Tunbridge Street where they could see the gable-ends of the old Manor-house, which was now, no doubt, preparing to welcome its new guest. There was all the charm of quaintness and a dignified seclusion here, but it was not like the Priory. No place could ever seem so interesting or fascinating as that to Winifred and her sister, and the thought that their heroine—the girl they were to shun, and whom they ought scarcely to look at—was perhaps coming into possession of it was like a turning-point in their own lives. All the emphasis their fancies about her had needed was given by this idea, and to see her after talking it over would be almost as good as a bit of genuine romance.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE "BERLIN BAZAAR."

THE "Berlin Bazaar" was a comfortable, old-fashioned-looking shop, standing about midway in the High Street of the town. Mrs. Cleve let her second floor to first-class lodgers, and the quaint wainscoted front room—the one with the curving window overlooking the street—was always in request when the hunting season began, or there was any local festivity in prospect. The house, like many another in Barnford High Street, had been a very grand one in its day, and Mrs. Cleve was proud of her parlor. More than one artist had asked to make a sketch of that and the piece of the original hall-way remaining, with its long windows, lattice-worked and beaded with such fine oak carvings, showing what the character of the house had been about the time William of Orange arrived in Devonshire.

The shop was a cheerful little place, presided over by either Mrs. Cleve or her niece Susan, as blooming a Devon maiden as one might wish to see. As Mrs. Cleve many times remarked, the wool and fancy-work business had a *character* in trade *quite* its own; nothing to take away the *little refined airs* Susan had acquired in Miss Truefitt's

school, nothing to rob her pretty white hands of their slimness or delicate texture, whereas if she had stayed at home in Exeter she would have been helping her father in the butter business—quite another thing. And then what a favorite Susan was! and with all the great ladies of the county, not one of whom but had something pleasant and kindly to say to the girl or of her; and Mrs. Cleve, although she knew well enough how to keep her own place, and see that Susan kept hers, was a person whose opinions on a great many subjects were listened to and respected. She had not hesitated to express her views on Colonel Dymond's will, though to her former mistress, old Miss Dymond of the Manor-house, she could not, as she well knew, allude to certain people left out so cruelly in the cold. But she was sincerely fond of the Beresfords, although she had no patience with "his" foolish pride, which kept so many simple comforts, if not actual necessities, away from his family; and before taking her own niece into the shop, she had gone over to Little Barnford to make a formal proposition to Mrs. Beresford.

"I know it ain't what Miss Winnie ought to have looked for," the good woman said, sitting up-stairs with Mrs. Beresford, out of hearing of the master of the house, "but I'd treat her like a lady. And this Kensington work is all the rage now, and I know many a lady of quality as is glad to take money for it. If you let her come into my shop, Mrs. Beresford, I'll see that all my customers understand that she's there *doing* the choice needle-work. And, bless me!

what's the difference, I'd like to know, between my paying her for doing it, where she has all the silks and wools 'andy, and paying young Miss Paulis of Barton House for the lace she makes? She does it for the Church, I know, but all the same I don't doubt she's glad to earn a few guineas for herself. I say, ma'am, let her come."

It may be presumed that Mrs. Cleve knew the condition of things very clearly at the Tor House when she faced Mrs. Beresford with a proposition which fairly took away that lady's breath. She listened, poor woman, and in her heart wished that the plan might be carried out, but well she knew that to suggest such a thing to her husband would be to make him miserable, and to increase the restrictions he had already laid upon his children. Enough of this she explained to her visitor to show that her own appreciation and acquiescence were not wanting, and so it had not broken the friendliness between Mrs. Cleve and the family at the Tor House. Winnie had been permitted to try her hand at some work, and, as we have seen, had finished it, triumphantly declaring that for the time being there could be no harm in concealing the fact from her unhappy father.

The girls had to check their inclination to fly along, instead of walking, as they entered the town and found themselves in the pleasant old High Street; but there needed to be no restraint upon their bright smiling demeanor, which I must say was such as to make up for the shabbiness of their garments—the generally "depressed look," as Winnie called *it*, of their cloaks and bonnets, and even their best gowns.

Mrs. Cleve saw them coming along in the sunshine—tall, straight young figures, all unconscious of any power in themselves to please, and yet with the peculiar little air of dignity which they inherited from their mother, and which was a decided improvement on the stiff Beresford pride.

"There come the young ladies from the Tor House," said Mrs. Cleve to Susan. "Bless their young hearts! I wish I could see them dressed as they should be. Not but what they look the real ladies they are. I wonder how the colonel's heiress will look beside them?"

"She is very nice," said little Susan, coming to the window to look over her aunt's shoulder. "I heard it from Mrs. Melrose's maid's cousin, Jane Harkness."

Susan knew all about the colonel's will, and the young girls from the Tor House were invested with a certain air of romance, inasmuch as they were the heroines of one portion of the story. Gladys Ferrol might be a very interesting character, but these young people had their own fascination for the Devonshire girl, who was fonder of her own county and its belongings than she could ever hope to be of a new-comer, even though the Priory was to be in her possession. Susan was at the door, ready to open it for the girls, by the time they appeared, and Mrs. Cleve behind her counter nodded and smiled a greeting, which, if a trifle patronizing, was still polite enough to show that she realized her little visitors belonged to "the family."

As for Winifred and Janey, the "Berlin Bazaar" had a *peculiar* fascination for them which they could scarcely de-

fine, and yet which both sisters felt directly they opened the door and came in contact with its simple contents. The shelves containing wools and patterns, and green boxes labelled this and that and the other, extended along two sides of the shop, leaving a space large enough for the glass door leading into Mrs. Cleve's little parlor, where she and Susan had their cup of tea of an afternoon, and where the Beresford girls always spent a delightful half-hour when they came to Barnford. The two counters were of shining dark oak, and the seats before them were very comfortable; for many of Mrs. Cleve's customers came a long distance, and were, as she well knew, ladies who liked an easy place to sit down and talk over fancy-work at their leisure, perhaps permitting themselves the indulgence of a little harmless gossip too with Mrs. Cleve, who knew everything that went on in or around the place, and was regarded not only as a competent authority, but a perfectly "safe" person, in that she knew who she could say this or that or the other to, and where, with every seeming deference, she had to draw the line. Susan rarely had anything to say, but she was so often present during these confabs that she had imbibed the spirit of the place, and knew almost as much of the "leading families" as her aunt did; and it was not vulgar knowledge, not information acquired from idle curiosity or through love of gossip, but because of genuine interest in all the people, high and low, she had been brought up among, and who had *certainly* respected her when she was Polly Dawson as much *as they did now that she was Tom Cleve's widow.* "And

it comes of knowing *my* place as well as I know theirs," Mrs. Cleve would say, sententiously.

"So you brought the work, did you, Miss Winnie?" said Mrs. Cleve, smiling, and holding out her hands for Winifred's precious package. The young girl colored with pleasure as she undid the paper and brought her silk piano scarfs to light. They were certainly very well worked, and Mrs. Cleve could not fail to be satisfied.

Janey pulled her sister's elbow. "Tell about the designs," she said, eagerly.

"Oh," cried Winifred; "it's only that I was going to suggest, Mrs. Cleve, our writing to Arthur and asking him to do some special designs. You know what beautiful ones he did last Christmas for you, and now he is going to London."

"Yes, yes," said Mrs. Cleve. "I think that would be very nice, Miss Winnie; and, by-the-way, I've a letter for your ma—from him, I suppose."

Susan knew all about it, but Mrs. Cleve involuntarily lowered her voice, as though Mr. Beresford might be lurking behind the little parlor door, ready to snatch the precious letter out of her hands before she could hand it over to Winnie. There had been an agreement that when Arthur had anything of great moment to communicate, the letter should be sent to Mrs. Cleve's care, lest it arrive in Little Barnford during one of Mr. Beresford's peculiarly gloomy periods.

Winnie took the letter eagerly enough, wondering what it might contain; but they would have to wait until later to

know that. Meanwhile there was the delight of receiving seventeen shillings counted out from Mrs. Cleve's little till, and then, as usual, the girls were asked into the parlor for their cup of tea. There was something very cosy about such invitations. The parlor had one long, rather narrow window overlooking a bit of a garden, and beyond it the tall gable ends of Barnford Hospital—a home for “twelve townsmen of Barnford who should be proven worthy of maintenance,” founded by a sixteenth-century patron of the old place, and kept up with much dignity and solemn character. Its fine old portal, leading into a sunny, silent courtyard, around which the dwellings, chapel and refectory, were ranged, fronted the High Street; but from Mrs. Cleve's little garden the irregular mass of brick and ivy-hung stonework was pleasantly visible, and the Beresford girls liked sipping their tea, and eating seed-cake, and looking out upon the old men's home, while Susan or Mrs. Cleve chatted with them, or went back and forth to attend to the shop.

Susan announced almost at once that she was “dying to see Miss Ferrol,” and Winnie, with a blush, admitted that she and Janey were in hopes that the Manor-house carriage would go past while they were there.

“She's expected here at 5.10,” said Susan. “You can wait until then, miss, can't you? They're bound to drive by here, you know.”

“Oh yes,” cried Janey; “of course we can wait.”

“We can see her from the window,” said Winifred; and then she added, “I *have* seen her in Liverpool.”

"Law, Miss Winnie!" cried Susan. Luckily no one was in the shop just then, so both Mrs. Cleve and Susan listened breathlessly to Winifred's recital.

"Well, talk about rubbishing *books*," said Mrs. Cleve, with a sniff, "after such unexpected scenes in real life! I'd give more for a bit of fact than all the stuff those yer novel-writers gets up in twenty volumes, let alone their *threes*!"

Winifred and Janey were very proud of their piece of news, and it seemed quite in keeping with the topic under discussion to hear the voice of some one connected with the "affair," as the matter of the will was called in the shop. A young lady in a pretty, simple costume, with certain very artistic touches about it, was standing at the counter as Mrs. Cleve hurried out, and she greeted the shopkeeper with a smiling nod, something betokening the fact that she was one of Mrs. Cleve's special customers.

"It's Miss Mary Bruce," said Susan, in a kind of awe-struck whisper. No written romance could ever be quite like this actual one in real life to Mrs. Cleve's niece, and the fact that Miss Mary Bruce, the doctor's daughter, was in some fashion in it, made her appearance just then seem almost dramatic.

Janey put down her cup on the table, and leaned forward to look at the young lady with eager eyes and a feeling not unlike Susan's own. The customer was a girl of twenty or thereabouts, with a sweet, motherly sort of face, not pretty exactly, but very fair and sweet to look upon. Her complexion was clear and rosy, the eyes looked at you with a

frank, pleasant gleam in their blue depths, and the hair, brushed back simply from the fair young brow, was of that soft indeterminate shade of brown which pretends neither to golden or chestnut tints, and yet has its own character. It was certainly just the sort of hair for Mary Bruce, who had no extremes in her nature, and yet was always cheerful and "comfortable;" one of those creatures who never rise to any heights, and yet who always contrive to bring sunshine into shady places by the mere force of simple goodness, and perhaps wholesome matter-of-factness.

- The heights and depths of feeling which made a "whirlwind" of little Janey, the vigorous gayety and brilliancy of Winifred's nature, would have been utterly incomprehensible to Dr. Bruce's only daughter, and yet she would have managed never to jar upon or cloud any of it. Somehow she would have sympathized even where she could not have understood, and would at all times have been a wholesome, comforting companion. When Mary Bruce went out to any of the more formal festivities in Barnford, or even in the country round about, it was said of her that she always "filled a place" prettily and well. She always had something to say, not too much or too little, never very brilliant, but certainly never stupid or inappropriate; and yet there were no signs of special talent or accomplishments about her, only a sort of adaptability, which I believe, when it is recognized at its true worth, will be called genius quite as much as though it found expression in a remarkable choice of words, a gift at combining forms and color on canvas, or

interpreting great music, and it is so often much more useful and agreeable to the people around one.

Mary Bruce and her tribe of young brothers would, with the people already brought before my reader, round the circle of Gladys Ferrol's new world for a certain time at least, and so her appearance had just a touch of dramatic fitness in it, after all—unconscious to the actor, of course, for nothing dramatic would have occurred to the doctor's soft-eyed, cheery-voiced daughter. Nevertheless, she had thrilled her little unseen audience, who listened almost breathless while she was speaking of Gladys to Mrs. Cleve above the pile of blue wools she was matching.

"Oh, Miss Dymond won't let her coming make much difference, I expect," the pleasant voice was saying. "The boys are already excited enough over it. Lionel came home from London this morning, and reports her as 'awfully jolly.'"

Miss Bruce gave a pretty little laugh.

"I hope it'll be so, miss," was Mrs. Cleve's answer. "No, I don't think Miss Dymond will bother about her much one way or the other. It's my belief that's just why the captain picked her out. He wanted the child to be let alone, so to speak, till he got back."

"I shouldn't be surprised," said Miss Mary. "That wool is all right, I think, Mrs. Cleve. Two ounces will be enough, for, as mamma says, your ounces can be counted upon."

This bit of pleasantry, and the smile which accompanied it, were very gratifying to Mrs. Cleve, who watched her customer's trim little figure go along the High Street with

great satisfaction. It was just Miss Mary's "way," but what a pleasant way! No doubt Mrs. Cleve was one of those who regarded it as better than genius.

The girls darted out of the parlor as soon as the shop door closed. They had been afraid the customer would stay after 5.10. It was that now, and the three young people clustered in the window, waiting for that coveted glimpse of their heroine. Some other people in shops over the way were also on the watch; and although Gladys was not at all aware of it, her arrival in Barnford was thus made a sort of triumph.

The sound of the horses' hoofs broke in upon a moment of almost silence in the quaint, sunshiny street, and the carriage from the Manor-house whirled by. There was only time for a glimpse of its occupants, but luckily Gladys was eagerly on the lookout for everything, and she was sitting on the side which gave the Beresfords a full although fleeting view of her. An impression of a rather pale young face, pretty, and certainly interesting, gazed forth from beneath the shadow of a beautiful hat with long black plumes; a gloved hand resting on the open window of the carriage; eager eyes and parted, half-smiling lips. All this was in the impression the girls received as the heiress of the Priory and the colonel's money drove by in the sunshine; but what they did not know was that in that one swift glimpse of the shop-window Gladys, leaning forward, had recognized *Winifred*, and like Mrs. Cleve, thought truth was certainly *stranger than fiction*.

CHAPTER XVII.

BARNFORD MANOR-HOUSE.

GLADYS, as may well be imagined, arrived in Barnford with every nerve and fibre of her young body fairly tingling with expectancy. Those days in London had been eventful enough, no doubt, but they had been too full of the bewilderment of first impressions; there had been too strongly the sense that she was merely a visitor to have her realize that a new life had begun for her in a strange country. But here it was all different. There might be a certain feeling of confused fancies still, but the young girl realized that there was to be a permanence about her associations with Barnford. Even when the period of Miss Dymond's sway and life at the Manor-house was over, Gladys was still to make her English home there, for the Priory was, as she knew, her inheritance.

She followed Mrs. Perkins out on to the platform of the covered railway-station, conscious that every one about knew just who she was, and that the Manor-house carriage was outside waiting for her. There was no difficulty in finding attentive porters, and Miss Dymond's footman was *already on hand*, curious, as all the rest were, about the

colonel's heiress, and yet too well bred in his duties to betray any anxiety on the subject. Then they passed through the waiting-rooms and out to that side of the station fronting the town. Gladys, whose mind was attuned to expecting something very quaint and old, from what Barbara and Lionel had told her, was rather disappointed by the spruce air of newness in the little square, the villas, the church, and the circular drive which she saw before her, but she soon found that there were only modern elements in the new portion of the town. Old Barnford proper lay beyond them, and in a few moments, from the carriage windows, the girl's eyes found forms of architecture and streets mediæval enough to please even her romantic ideas of what her English home should be.

Mrs. Perkins was stolidly silent, so Gladys had to decide for herself that the long street they were entering was the principal business thoroughfare of the town. It presented a delightful mingling of old shops and houses, and the market square had for its central object a curious town cross, which the loyal people of Barnford had erected to Queen Anne in days of yore, and whence many a glowing harangue had been uttered in times of political disturbance. Here and there the little mistress of the Dymond estate saw streets narrow and muddy, with the queerest old houses; some whose windows and roofs bulged forward, others with low thatched roofs and tiny lattice-work casements. The George Inn, a pattern of solidity and respectability, was the *most conspicuous building* in the long street; then came a

row of shops; finally the "Berlin Bazaar;" and here, with a little cry, which she was quick to suppress, Gladys had recognized the face of the girl she had seen in Liverpool.

Gladys had been swift to note the locality, and to decide upon a visit to the shop as soon as possible. She had seen Janey's face too, a prettier one than Winnie's, no doubt, and with sufficient resemblance to the older girl to make Gladys sure that she was her sister; but Janey was thin and rather meagre, unlike Winnie, who was all softness and bloom. Gladys felt as if she were an old friend—a Beresford, no doubt; but she was sure she would like her.

All this occupied her mind so fully that she was hardly conscious that the aspect of the High Street had changed. Shops had given way to a few houses with straggling gardens; some, of the thatched roof and mediæval order, stood in patches of the afternoon sunlight, revealing something that was almost like squalor, and the inhabitants of such homes, who seemed to be chiefly old men and babies, were of a very poor although cleanly class. Gladys wondered why this poverty should come in after such thrift and well-to-do regularity, but she was still more amazed when the carriage stopped before a gate-way in a long, high brick wall, and Mrs. Perkins's sharp voice said,

"'Ere is the manor, miss!"

Gladys started. Her ideas of a manor were perhaps a trifle vague, but they included a park, sheltered drives and walks, woodlands, and a certain dim historic splendor. Could it be possible that this brick wall skirting a garden, and in

a portion of the street which was only a trifle better than its most miserable part, belonged to a place dignified by such a name? And Lionel had said the house was more than two hundred years old!

But dismayed or not, there was nothing for the colonel's heiress to do but descend from the carriage and pass through the gate which the solemn footman held open; and then she saw that the brick wall concealed a really fine old house—a gray stone mansion which had once been set in a park—but as the fortune of the older Dymond (the gay Captain George Dymond of Queen Anne's Court) had dwindled away, the length and breadth of the park lands had shrunk, until at last only the narrow lawn in front and the prim garden at the back were left. But for all that, no stately edifice or secluded park would have made up to old Miss Dymond for the house where her ancestors were born and had died, where she had lived, baby, child, girl, and woman, sixty-five years this very autumn.

The door-way was large, but very low, and there were trees to the right, sharply defined against the sunset sky, now full of rooks, whose cawing greeted Gladys with sounds she ever after associated with Barnford. One day there would be, did she but know it, a triumphal entry into her own home, sounds of welcome which should make her heart beat with pride and joy; but when that day had come Gladys could but recall the quaint sounds in the old rookery by the Manor-house on the September afternoon which saw her arrival there.

The door was opened by a nice-looking young maid-serv-

ant. Gladys was aware of a spacious hall panelled in oak nearly black with age, two quaint-looking stands of armor, and a wide, beautiful staircase, up which Mrs. Perkins led her. There was here only a short wide hall, well windowed, and with heavy doors to right and left. To the one at the right Mrs. Perkins turned; the maid-servant following them said, in a half-whisper, "Mistress is in there," but Mrs. Perkins tapped softly. A thin voice said, "Come in," and Gladys found herself ushered into a room where she was destined to spend many lonely hours—the drawing-room with the carved ceiling and the great window, about which Lionel and Barbara had talked to her.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE HONORABLE MISS DYMOND.

HALF-LIGHTS are often very friendly, and Gladys, as she advanced somewhat timidly, was thankful that the sunset was flinging no bright gleams into the old drawing-room, although shadows from it, which she later learned to watch like friends, were trooping slowly across one side of the wall, and unexpected places were lighted up into sudden and unusual prominence. Everything was subdued, solid, and in keeping with the architecture of the old house, and although there were almost no modern touches, there were objects which showed the room to be in common daily use. A great mirror set into the wall at one side, and which reflected her own figure standing midway in the room, showed also the book-shelves, the wide chintz-covered sofa, and the large square writing-table; but naturally enough Gladys's eyes were fastened upon the old lady, who rose from a seat in the window, and stood regarding the new-comer with the coldest pair of gray eyes Gladys thought she had ever seen.

"How do you do, my dear?" Miss Dymond said, in a voice that well matched her eyes. She took Gladys's hand *in hers*, looked down into the frank young face uplifted,

and after a second or two of indecision kissed it carelessly. "Sit down here. And, Jarvis" (to the maid) "bring the tea up at once. We are half an hour behind time, but I suppose I must consider this an unusual occasion."

"Did she smile?" thought Gladys, as something in the way of a movement of the muscles gave Miss Dymond's face the appearance of a wintry cheerfulness.

"Is it, ma'am?" she said aloud, and took the seat Miss Dymond pushed towards her.

"I take tea at five o'clock promptly," asserted the old lady, "and after to-day not an hour is to be changed. There—give your things to Perkins."

It was done, and the two sat staring at each other a few moments in silence. Gladys would have given much for the fluency which had seemed so easy when with Lady Marchmont, but she felt, as it were, stricken dumb in the presence of this gaunt old lady. She tried one sentence after another, but they ended in a sort of half-uttered gurgle in her throat, never coming near her lips.

"What's the matter with your throat?" demanded Miss Dymond, so suddenly and sharply that Gladys gave a little jump.

"Nothing, thank you, ma'am."

"Well, do you often snicker in that way?"

"Was I snickering?" said Gladys, with a wild desire to laugh, and feeling her face burning. "I—I won't do it again."

"I don't look for perfect manners from an American,"

the old lady pursued, amiably, "but I hate any one to—" Just what, she did not say, for Jarvis entered with the tea-things, and as Miss Dymond moved over to the low table where the maid set them out, Gladys had time to recover her composure. A cup of delicious-tea, some slices of thin bread-and-butter, cake, and Devonshire cream, went far towards reviving her spirits. By the time it was eaten, the sunset shadows and drifts of color had faded away; the fine old room had settled down into a tranquil sort of twilight, in which its somewhat sombre tones were emphasized and yet softened. Miss Dymond absently trifled with her spoon and teacup, and looked away beyond Gladys's girlish figure to the garden, while the girl listened to the revelry of the rooks outside the window. The hour was the first of many such which Gladys was to spend in the days to come, and in some way that first evening she gained a sense of permanence with the objects in the room, the slow movements of life about her. Everything was very still, and Gladys was tired. Miss Dymond's voice, suggesting that she might go to her room, was welcome.

"Ring that bell by the chimney-piece," the old lady said; and when Jarvis appeared, Miss Dymond told her to take Miss Ferrol to her room.

"Jarvis will wait on you," she said, shortly; and Gladys, bowing her thanks, was grateful to escape from the room and to follow the maid up-stairs.

The bedroom which had been prepared for her overlooked the street and the breezy downs stretching beyond. Far



"YOU CAN SEE YOUR OWN PLACE, MISS, FROM HERE—THE PRIORY."

away and to the right the turrets of the Priory were visible, showing among the trees of the verdant park, and Jarvis, seeing that the young girl went directly to the window, said, in a pleasant voice,

“You can see your own place, miss, from here — the Priory.” And she came up, indicating it with smiling eyes and lips.

“Oh, isn’t that nice!” cried Gladys. “In winter, I suppose, you can see it better. But by next winter, or another year, perhaps, I shall be there.”

“Oh, indeed, miss,” said the maid, politely.

Gladys lingered a moment, taking in various objects in the landscape, before she returned to a survey of the room. It was large and well furnished, with a fine fireplace and heavily carved chimney-piece, quaint cupboards set in the wall, a square bow-window, and very old-fashioned pink and white chintz hangings. Adjoining it was a tiny dressing-room. Her trunks were already there, and Jarvis, who had opened them, looked up from beside the largest to ask Gladys’s opinion as to what she would wear. The night before she had worn her very prettiest gown, a soft white nun’s veiling with dainty ribbon trimmings, and among Miss Violet Bruce’s brilliantly dressed friends it had not looked out of place for the hour she and Barbara were allowed to remain in the drawing-room; but there could be no necessity here for such a toilet, and Gladys went down upon her knees at Jarvis’s side, showing her where a nice quiet little black and white sateen was folded. The maid evidently approved thorough-

ly of this selection, for she liked the idea of something young and bright and cheerful in the old house. She brushed and braided the girl's profuse hair, and helped her into the sateen, talking pleasantly the while, but with the air of respect which Gladys had already noticed among English servants.

"Mistress takes an early dinner, you see," Jarvis said, fastening the little brooch of hammered gold which Gladys wore at her throat, "and so there's supper at eight o'clock."

"And what do we do in the evening?" asked Gladys, who already felt sure that the life at the Manor-house would be a routine seldom varied.

Jarvis looked somewhat perplexed. "Well, I don't know, miss, just what you *will* do. Mistress generally reads."

The prospect was not so unpromising. Gladys was passionately fond of reading, and she had already taken note of the well-stocked book-shelves at one end of the drawing-room. But perhaps Miss Dymond would require reading aloud. Even that Gladys felt sure would be better than talking with the grim old lady, or running the risk of—snickering.

She made her way down the great shadowy oaken staircase, already possessed by a feeling that a life of action had begun. Miss Dymond was in the drawing-room knitting vigorously on a huge gray stocking; the candles were not lighted, but, as Gladys learned later, Miss Dymond always, to use her own expression, "sat out" the dusk.

"Come in," she said to the fresh-looking little figure in

black and white. "Now go about the room and choose a chair, and mind you keep to it. People ought to use the same chair, just as they wear their own clothes. I do hate to see young people gadding about a room, never able to keep still in any one place."

A very comical scene ensued ; for Gladys, dismayed at the idea of having to make a choice and abide by it, was determined at all events to be cautious, and Miss Dymond, it was evident, took an alert interest in the question. She watched her young charge going slowly from one chair to another, testing each of them, lolling back in one, sitting upright in another, bumping up and down on the severe springs of a third, and finally, but with a very reluctant air, deciding in favor of a little velvet-covered chair which had belonged to the drawing-room since Miss Dymond's girlhood.

"I feel like Goldie Locks in the story of 'The Three Bears,'" said Gladys ; but Miss Dymond's face, and the little jump she gave, made her wish the words unsaid.

"Good gracious, child !" she exclaimed, "is your head full of stuff like that ?"

Gladys had no intention of being pert, for she answered, quite involuntarily,

"Yes, 'm."

"Well, upon my word !" said Miss Dymond.

"What I mean," Gladys hastened to say, "is that I love fairy tales and everything of that kind."

Miss Dymond remained silent for a few moments, while her needles clicked in the shadows.

"I suppose you know," she said presently, "that your guardian does not wish you to have any governess until he returns in April, or I can assure you I would very quickly see to it that you had some one to take that sort of nonsense out of your mind. But there is no reason why you should not read under my direction, and we will begin to-morrow."

Gladys, sitting still in the chair she had chosen with so much care, listened, and wondered what Miss Dymond's course of reading would be ; but she said nothing, and when the darkness increased until they could not see each other's faces, the old lady told her to ring for lights. During the next hour, while Miss Dymond half dozed over a huge volume of travels, Gladys made an investigation of the bookshelves. It was a little dispiriting not to find anything more recent than the last twenty years in the collection, but she was fascinated by the discovery of a number of little volumes of the "Spectator" and the "British Classics." If Miss Dymond would only let her make her own selections, all might be well.

CHAPTER XIX.

MISS DYMOND THROWS DOWN THE GAUNTLET.

"**B**UT how do you know there is an otter?" Gladys asked the question of Lionel Bruce the day after her arrival at Barnford. The "tribe" had come over to the Manor-house; four boys of various ages younger than Lion were now seated stiffly on four of the drawing-room chairs; and Mary Bruce, sitting nearer to Miss Dymond, kept that old lady interested while Lionel discoursed with Gladys of the otter-hunt planned for the morrow. Four pairs of eyes and four pairs of ears, however, were taking it all in, eager to rush into the conversation, but well did their young owners know that Miss Dymond would never permit the babel of voices which made the doctor's house merry enough these last days of the long vacation.

"Why, you see, it's this way," said Lionel. "We know there are otters about, and when any one finds what we call his seal, or the mark of his foot on the banks, we know where to track him. Jones, that's Tom Marchmont's keeper, saw the prints all along some of the brooks back of the Priory woods, and we propose to start out to-morrow. Mary's

a famous old girl going after the otter hounds,* and you know you and she could walk on, or run part of the time, without any need of being in and out of the water, as we are, and you'd see the sport. We fellows go right ahead with Jones and Mr. Marchmont and the rest of them, and don't we get a good wetting!"

"Do you jump into the water after the otter?" demanded Gladys whose eyes were alight with interest.

The uneasy movements of Frank's legs on a chair near Gladys made Lion laugh, and Frank was encouraged to say, "You'd think so! wait until you see us." With a furtive glance in Miss Dymond's direction, he joined the two in the window. Frank was a fair-haired, freckled, wiry little fellow of fourteen, with the merriest, plainest sort of face, and Gladys felt sure she should like him. Walter, Godfrey, and Harold, the other three, looked at the trio in the window with a look of agony upon their young countenances, but not daring to join the group. It was interesting, no doubt, to see their American cousin, but horrible to be compelled to sit half an hour on the same chairs; and

* For the further explanation of otter-hunting for young American readers, I would say here that the animal is a kind of water polecat very ruinous to fish. It casts its eyes upward in a curious manner, so that diving below the fish, it can see them without being seen. It is a furry, web-footed animal about two feet long, and a burrower. It always enters its burrow under water although it cannot remain long itself without coming up to the surface of any stream which it haunts. It has a terrible bite, and clings fiercely to life. It travels along the river-banks, or swims half under the water.



MISS DYMOND LOOKED UP TO INQUIRE WHAT SHE MEANT.

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the stricken sort of glances flung in Mary's direction moved her at last to say,

"Well, Cousin Honora, I'm glad to find you so well. We must be going now—and thank you so much for letting Gladys come up this afternoon. You see, it's late in the season for an otter to be hunted, so she wouldn't have another chance."

Mary Bruce was a prime favorite with old Miss Dymond, or it may be presumed that such a speedy invitation to the doctor's house would not have been accepted for our heroine, especially as it involved her staying all night. The hunting party was to assemble at half-past five the next morning, and accordingly Gladys was to go up to the Bruces' by five o'clock, and sleep there—a prospect very alluring to the young girl, who had already begun to dread another long evening in Miss Dymond's company.

The boys made a cheerful little clatter going out of the drawing-room and down the shining, uncarpeted staircase, and Gladys enjoyed it. She had not been twenty-four hours under Miss Dymond's roof, but the stillness had already begun to be oppressive. The homestead was a quiet place, but there always had been a consciousness of life about it—of something ready to wake into pleasant, cheerful sound at the slightest bidding—certainly nothing which suggested that the quiet was preferable or enforced. But here the stillness seemed to Gladys, who was young and impetuous, and full of activity, as premeditated and desirable as the meals themselves. She could almost imagine Miss Dymond saying to

her, from her great gaunt-looking arm-chair by the fireplace, "We speak once an hour," just as she had said that morning, "I walk in the garden once a day; you are to come with me." And how long that walk had seemed! the pacing up and down the box walks, answering Miss Dymond's occasional questions about America, and feeling very sure that the old lady entertained a profound contempt for that country.

But an incident occurred later which seemed to Gladys positively tragic in its importance. Miss Dymond had hunted out from one of the book-shelves a little thin brown-covered book, which had, as she told Gladys, belonged to her grandfather, and which was such a history of the American revolution as to set the girl's face in a flame, and rouse a foolish spirit of anger and defiance in her heart. I say foolish only, because the little book would never have been accepted as an authority by any one except an eccentric person like Miss Dymond, but naturally enough the young girl, in her first hours of loneliness and strangeness, could not make these discriminations, and it proved an unlucky venture on the old lady's part. When Gladys, reading to herself, involuntarily curled up her lip and uttered an expressive "Humph!" Miss Dymond looked up to inquire what she meant.

"Such stories!" declared Gladys. "It says here, 'George Washington was a shrewd, designing man, who advanced his own interests under the guise of freeing his country.' I'd just like to know, Miss Dymond, what sort of a person *wrote this history.*"

"That's a fact," asserted the old lady, ignoring the last part of Gladys's sentence. "Washington is the most over-rated man in history."

"Oh, Miss Dymond!" cried Gladys.

"He was a selfish, intriguing creature," the old lady continued, her knitting-needles flying. "It was just the merest piece of luck that the Americans were victorious, and so this Washington of yours must be held up to every one as a model man and a hero! Rubbish!"

"Luck!" cried Gladys, unable to control her feelings. She drew herself together, and from her little velvet chair stared at Miss Dymond with tightened lips and scarlet cheeks. She thought of Lexington, of Valley Forge; she dropped her eyes half a moment, feeling a rush of tears scalding the lids, while the scenes in American history—pictures of hardship, struggle, long-endured and heroic loyalty, flashed before her mind, and from that hour Gladys felt herself Miss Dymond's enemy. During her silence the next minute she sealed the fate of the temporary guardian Captain Paget had selected, so far as she herself was concerned. She could be—she *would* be, so she decided—"deathly" polite; but so far as any feeling of affection might be concerned, Miss Dymond's death-blow was struck.

"And what good has come of it all, I'd like to know," said the old lady, with a contemptuous laugh. "A pretty mess of things your government makes. Just ruled by a mob. I wonder it hasn't taught the people in Ireland a lesson."

"Miss Dymond," cried Gladys, standing up, "you do not know!" How was she to argue with the old lady? Gladys walked across the room with a chilling demeanor, and put the little book back in its place. Her whole position seemed changed. She no longer felt the least desire to even try and like her hostess. She stood very still in front of the book-shelves, which were at the lower end of the drawing-room, apparently scanning the backs of the volumes, but in reality thinking about a dozen subjects very far away from those in the books before her. She took credit to herself in that she had said "nothing back" to Miss Dymond about England. I am afraid that in her heart at that moment Gladys called it "*her* old country;" but there was a certain satisfaction in this forbearance, and also in the reflection that it had not been her doing, that coming down here to the Manor-house. She had not asked Miss Dymond to take her, and now, thought the young girl, pressing her hands down upon the oaken ledge before her, since the old lady felt that way about Americans, she would give her just as little trouble as possible. She would be polite, and show all the respect due to age, because—well, because it was what Miss Lois and Cousin Bert would tell her was proper; but as for giving her anything more than this—never!

Gladys turned the key upon her heart and confidence, as it were, as she replaced the odious little volume, and Miss Dymond, knitting away, regarded the tall young figure, with its almost tragic carriage, with a sort of amused contempt. *She too had not the least idea of "caring" about the girl,*

although her motives were merely those of indifference. She liked Arthur Paget well enough to wish to please him, and she had enough spite against the Beresford faction to be glad to rule Gladys for a time, but there need be no waste of feeling or vitality in it all, Miss Dymond being one of those people who regard young persons under their charge as so many machines, to be kept in order until the law pronounces them of age. The fact that although Gladys was bound by the colonel's will to remain away from America for four years, she was to have the free use of a large part of her income in two years and a half, did not influence the old lady at all, for, to do her justice, her considerations were in no way mercenary. If she could succeed in keeping the Beresfords wholly in the background until the captain's return, she would have all the satisfaction she demanded. Apart from this, the girl might go her way, so long as it did not interfere with the ways of the household, and she would continue hers.

That would be all there would be about it, Miss Dymond thought, purling; and taking up her stitches with her accustomed regularity, while Gladys returned to the little chair which she had drawn into the window, still flushed and wounded, and, I am inclined to believe, ready to fling the colonel's money from her. But, after all, Miss Dymond represented a very small part of her English world, and the young girl was still conscious of the background of the old home, and certainly she had nothing to complain of in the cordiality of the Bruces. But that dark-eyed girl named

Beresford—Gladys felt certain she would like to have her for a friend; and what did it matter to her that Miss Dymond hated the very mention of the name? Now that such a gauntlet had been flung down between them, I am afraid that any idea of obedience to the old lady left Gladys's mind then and there, and forever—and there arose in her heart a feeling half-defiant, half-enthusiastic, and generous, that to take up the battle-cry of the Beresfords would be only right. Who were they, what was their claim, and why was she not to know them?

Gladys had hitherto entertained but the most vague ideas about the reality of her fortune, since she had so little actual money at her command, but now it came over her with a rush of amused satisfaction that the colonel's money was hers—all hers—and if she was not free to use it just yet, she could plan and project for the future, so that when the time came it would need very little formality to carry out her designs.

"They shall see what 'an American can do, after all," thought the poor child, forgetting that only Miss Dymond was hostile, and that it was the contemptuous prejudices of an eccentric old lady which had roused all this slumbering spirit of investigation—this desire to do some deed of generosity or self-sacrifice. But a small match lights a large flame; and while I would not have it supposed that Gladys's good intentions were all built up on a spirit of antagonism to Miss Dymond, yet they certainly caught their ardor and the needed stimulus from the old lady's abuse of her country.

Miss Dymond throws down the Gauntlet. 159

Gladys made no such analysis of her sentiments. "I'll let her *see*," was the vague expression of it all in her own mind; but mingled with this was real sympathy for Ralph Beresford's daughter, and a strange compunction when she recalled her interview with Mrs. John. If that startling person was not actually a Beresford, she was at least one of the opposite side, and Gladys in that first morning felt herself ranged on the enemy's side. What was the colonel's money worth if it could not succor the distressed, or show that an American was above stooping to profit by another's failure? In this frame of mind the girl prepared herself for her little visit to the Bruces, directing Jarvis, who packed a small portmanteau, feeling conscious of her dignity, and the sense that, however she must keep it in the background for the present, she might prove the arbiter of the Beresfords' destiny.

CHAPTER XX.

THE DOCTOR'S FAMILY.

IT was perhaps fortunate, considering Gladys's frame of mind that day, that the doctor's house, to which she was going, contained all the most desirable elements of happy home life. The carriage came for her at precisely half-past four o'clock; for, in spite of the short distance, Miss Dymond thought well to observe a certain formality in this first visit. But Gladys, whose feeling of irritation still lingered, said, with a little air of opposition,

"Why need I drive there? Lionel said it was only ten minutes' walk."

"I don't care what Lionel said," retorted Miss Dymond. "I have no intention of sending you gaping through the streets of the town the first day you are in it."

Gladys might have seen the reason of this but for that unfortunate word "gaping," and she felt stung by the way in which Miss Dymond took it for granted that nothing quite well-bred could be expected from her.

"In Harringford," she said, with a little smile lurking about the corners of her mouth, "Cousin Lois always let me walk in the town, but I never—gaped." And then a swift

recollection of the day she and Mollie Hildreth had lingered before Fortune & Miles's window came back. How long ago it seemed! How far away the day on which the great piece of news had been brought to her! Luckily, Miss Dymond took no notice of her last remark, and in a few moments Gladys was on her way to Doctor Bruce's, and enjoying the drive down the High Street, which was pleasantly active, the fine weather enticing people out-of-doors; and to the young girl, who knew that Barnford was to be, in a certain sense, her home, every object and face was interesting. Mr. Pounce, the green-grocer, standing among his vegetables, looked up, as the Manor-house carriage passed by, to say to a customer, "There goes the old colonel's American heiress;" and Gladys, leaning forward a little, just as she had done the evening before, knew that the round-faced, pleasant-looking man recognized her, and a wave of color swept across her countenance.

"A pretty-looking girl," said the customer, who was the curate from the old church just beyond the Manor-house. "But it was a terrible risk for the colonel to leave a child like that, whom he knew so little about, all that money."

"I think it were spite, a good deal of it," said Pounce, with a significant nod.

Old Admiral Trelaine and his elderly daughters, who were descending from the antique vehicle which had conveyed them in and around Barnford for twenty years or more, also turned their heads to look at the little stranger in old Miss Dymond's carriage. The Trelaines were "county"

people—a term Gladys, later in life, was to fully understand—but their home was near to the town, and they felt themselves part and parcel of everything that went on in Barnford. They were old friends of Captain Paget's, and long ago had numbered the Beresfords among their acquaintances, so that they were among those who felt a certain right to take an interest in the colonel's heiress.

"She is only fifteen, I believe," said Miss Matilda; "but I think we ought to call at the Manor-house and—show our interest. In a very short time, you know, she will be at the Priory, and then, of course—quite one of ourselves."

"Has Arthur Paget complete authority until she is eighteen?" the older Miss Trelaine inquired. She was two years her sister's senior, but she was a semi-invalid, and Miss Matilda was always recognized as the leading spirit in the family. The county news always reached her first.

"Why, yes," said Miss Matilda, with the little access of energy with which she always gave any special information; "although I believe after this year—when he comes home, you know—he is to consult her inclination about certain things."

"He could hardly have done so before he sent her to Miss Dymond's care," said the admiral. But Miss Matilda, who knew that the old lady at the Manor-house invariably beat her father at whist, only smiled at this and said nothing.

Gladys had turned to look at the large bow-window of the "Berlin Bazaar," hoping to see the same familiar face within it, but of course Winifred was in another part of the country.

Still, Gladys determined to try and find out from Lionel, or that nice boy Frank, something about this mysterious family, whose very name was forbidden at the Manor-house.

While she was in the midst of these reflections the carriage stopped before a comfortable brick house facing Col-borough Street. It was just where the newer portion of the town began to put forth its indications; but the doctor's place, known as "South End," was decidedly included in the older Barnford. It was built comfortably of red brick, with large bow-windows each side of the rather ponderous door-way, and although the door-steps were directly on the street, there was a fine rambling garden at the side and to the rear, shut in by a brick wall, above which the foliage of fine old trees was apparent.

Gladys experienced a little thrill of happy, home-like feeling the very moment that the door opened, for there was a look of sober, old-fashioned comfort even about the hall-way. It ran the length of the house, and a wide door at the lower end stood open, revealing the deep-green lawn—a fine cedar, the gardens full of September bloom, with the verdure of an orchard tangled and full of sunbeams in the distance. From a door-way just beyond the staircase Mary Bruce's pretty figure appeared, and she came forward, exclaiming, in her cordial, pleasant tone, "Oh, Gladys, this is very nice. We are going to have tea in the Green Room. That is the special family sanctorum. Come this way, won't you?" And she led her American cousin into the most delightful room Gladys thought she had seen since she left the homestead parlor.

The name had been given long ago because of its being a general lounging-place for all the family; certainly not because of any predominance of the color in the furnishings or hangings, which were all more on the russet in general effect. Mary's tea-table, with its shining damask and dainty china, its huge bowl of late roses, filled a central space, seeming to invite one to a cosey idle half-hour; but there were other points of interest in the russet-colored room, made bright by innumerable touches. There was a piano in one space, and hanging book-shelves above it were filled with music; the mother's work-basket, showing homely kinds of sewing—that suggestive collection of spools and darning cottons, scissors and bodkins, which tell their own story; chairs of various sizes and one or two tables stood about, and the three windows showed all the glory of the garden.

A lady scarcely middle-aged, like an older Mary, was sitting in the window, but she rose at once, greeting Gladys in a voice so like her daughter's that Gladys felt at home with her instantly. The boys flocked into the room from the garden a few moments later, and Gladys found herself made one of the family group with no suggestion of formality.

It was pleasant to hear them discuss everything with their mother, as though it was a matter of course to expect her interest and sympathy. Seeing Mrs. Bruce and Mary together, one could easily predict what the young girl's future, so far as outward semblance was concerned, would be, and it was from her mother that Mary Bruce had inherited that sweet sort of affability and tact which made her such a

favorite. They were the last people, perhaps, to encourage Gladys in her agitations over the Beresfords—her impulsive ideas of generosity; but the young girl felt instinctively that South End and the Green Room would be a magnet sure to draw her in its direction, whenever Miss Dymond permitted her to be led thither.

Naturally my little heroine was impatient for a talk with Frank, whom she now decided she liked even better as a comrade than Lionel, the latter being an Eton boy just high enough up in school to feel himself a little above mere nonsense, and in spite of her heiress-ship Gladys had not yet gone beyond the limits of certain childish enjoyments. It was all very well to be a visitor of consequence; to sit there in all the glory of her blue sateen gown; but she was looking forward with impatience to the sport to-morrow morning, when she would have on an old flannel dress and a pair of thick boots, and feel herself free to run as hard as she liked.

Some Barnford people presently appeared—girls not much older than herself, and two or three young men in tennis costumes. Lionel was busy handing teacups, and Frank and Gladys drifted together by a sort of common impulse, going out through the French window to the lawn. A confusion of voices filled the Green Room pleasantly. One of the visitors, a girl of sixteen, in a blue-and-white tennis gown, with an extraordinary long, slim waist, was beginning to play some waltzes on the piano, and under cover of all these cheerful sounds it was not difficult for Gladys to say to her companion,

"Frank, I want to ask you something very particular; but first you must promise not to tell any one else."

"I won't," said Frank, promptly. He felt very proud of Gladys Ferrol's notice of him, and was only too willing to promise any allegiance she demanded.

"Well, then," said Gladys, leaning back against the cedar-tree, and looking anxiously at her companion, "I want to know something about the Beresfords—the people that Miss Dymond can't bear to have mentioned, you know. Are they my cousins?"

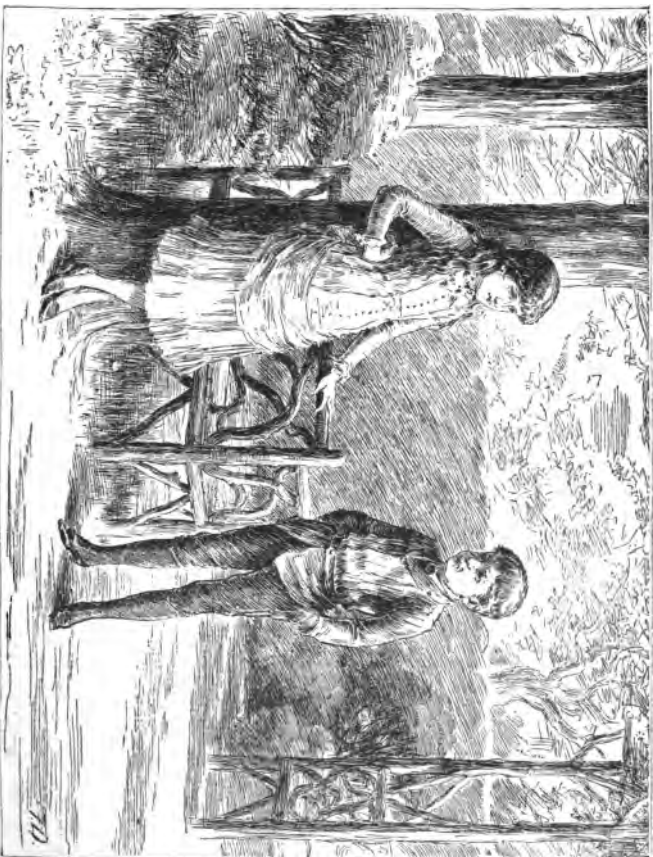
Frank screwed his mouth and eyes into an expression of much perplexity.

"I don't know," he said. "They are cousins of hers. Yes, I suppose they are a *kind* of cousins."

"But you're all only a kind of cousins, I guess," said Gladys, laughing. "I know that Barbara Bruce, and I tried to trace the family history, but could not make much of it. I won't think of it when I'm with you, though," added the girl, quickly, a wistfulness coming into her eyes, "because I am often so lonely that it's better to try and make believe we're all first cousins, or something like that."

"Brothers and sisters would be jollier," suggested Frank, with his hands in his pockets, and one of his ever-restless feet engaged in kicking the legs of a rustic bench near them.

"Yes," assented Gladys. "I never had any myself, and I suppose it would be fun to belong to a great big family. But, Frank, this is what puzzles me: Why should the Beresfords be—so mysterious?"



“YES, I SUPPOSE THEY ARE A KIND OF COUSINS,” HE SAID.

"There is *something*, I know," said the boy. "I can't remember just what it was, but I know there was no end of a row after the old colonel died. He educated Mr. Ralph Beresford."

"Ah," cried Gladys, "*he* is the one! The tall girl I saw in Liverpool must be his daughter."

"I shouldn't wonder," said Frank. "They live over at Little Barnford—about two miles from here. The place is called the Tor House. He's the greatest one! Jinks! I wouldn't be Donald Beresford, or Arthur either."

"Who are they?—the sons?"

Frank nodded.

"Yes. He is a regular old duffer—so gloomy, you know. We heard that Arthur had left home. Mr. Beresford won't let anybody do a thing for them since Colonel Dymond died. I wish I could remember more about it, Gladys. I never can keep anything but fun in my head five minutes."

Gladys laughed.

"Well, it's something to know this much about them," she said, cheerfully. "I'm very glad I asked you, Frank, and perhaps some of these days I will have more to tell you."

Gladys had already begun to lay a plan for future action, but she had no need just at present for further confidences or any advice, and there were many other topics more interesting to Frank than the Beresfords. He was anxious to know if the boys in America played cricket or base-ball most, and how they did this, that, and the other; and it was Gladys's turn to look perplexed and rack her brains and mem-

ory, but the talk made them such good friends that when, after dinner, a game of hide-and-seek in the old garden was proposed, Frank volunteered to show her his favorite places of concealment. It was an amusing and exciting hour, for even some of the elders joined in the sport. Doctor Bruce was dragged out of his study into the garden, Mary was also pressed into active service, and all of Lionel's Etonian dignity was forgotten while he played, joining the band which opposed that in which Gladys had Frank for her champion and protector. They played it on the French *cache-cache* system, one band hiding, the other seeking, and the usual run to the goal being an exciting chase. Gladys found herself shrieking wildly as Lionel darted upon her in her concealment, and she sped across the lawn to the goal in the dusk, feeling as though a bayonet was after her. But the boys were enchanted over Gladys's ability, her swift-footedness, and general air of pluck, and they paid it all the highest compliment by declaring they would give her a good run on the morrow.

The long twilight had faded; the sky was throbbing with stars that in this English sky looked to Gladys so much like old familiar friends (the Pleiades shining above the cedar-tree as though they were gazing at her in the homestead pathways) that she stood still when the merry party had finished their last game, looking up into the heavens, a curious sense of strangeness coming over her. The moon had *risen*, and was flooding the old garden with silvery light, and *Gladys remembered how*, as a very little child, she had always

loved to dance among the moonbeams in the box walks just outside Miss Lois's favorite window. How hard it seemed to realize that all the little familiar actions of her life appeared to belong to another country and another time or period. By turning her head a very little she could see the turrets of the Priory darkly outlined in the radiance that was beginning to suffuse even the distant hill-sides. Those gray lines of her new home had already begun to possess a strange fascination for Colonel Dymond's lonely little heiress. For some reason they seemed to speak to her of something which in this strange country was her very own, for there was something tangible and home-like in this part of her inheritance, and Gladys inwardly resolved to take her first opportunity of making an investigation of the only place, as she supposed, she had a right to call her home.

When they went into the drawing-room Gladys had a chair close to Mrs. Bruce's at the round table, and watched her skilful fingers over some lace-work, while Lionel took out his violin, and Mary played an accompaniment on the piano for his very creditable rendering of one of Raff's cavatinas.

Gladys rested her elbow on the table, her head upon her hand, and listened dreamily, the music stirring thoughts of home, of her new life begun in Devonshire, of her future position as mistress of the Priory. She had seen and heard enough even in this short time to realize that she had before her many possibilities for which her life in Harringford, with all its simple refinements, offered not the slightest precedent.

She was beginning to understand certain things which she could not have defined or put into words, and yet which had made an impression upon her and chilled her: for instance, the way in which the young people who had stopped on the way from tennis that afternoon had treated her, showed the young girl that her position, as Mrs. Melrose had told her, might be a lonely one. She had been struck by the way in which kind-hearted Mrs. Bruce had spoken of one or two of their guests, intimating that Captain Paget might not care to have her very friendly with them.

“Very nice girls, you know, my dear; but I hardly think you will know them when you are at the Priory.”

It was all confusing and just a trifle saddening to the young girl from Harringford, who at this moment was feeling very far away from home. What she wanted certainly was power to do as she liked with her fortune, but she craved neither splendor nor exclusiveness; and as she sat in the doctor's drawing-room, the sense of home-life, of peace, and of permanence, the genial influence of the mother's presence, the harmony of a united household, gradually filled her with a longing to be really one with it all—to own some part in such a circle. But could it be? Gladys had no means of knowing even whether she herself would be accepted on such generous and friendly terms. She moved just a very little nearer to Mrs. Bruce, and stole her hand into that lady's lap, with a look of pleading in her face that the motherly heart could not resist.

“*The child is very lonely,*” Mrs. Bruce said later to her

husband. "I only hope Arthur Paget will not put too many restrictions upon her life. I don't think she is one of the kind to stand it."

The good doctor shook his head. "You know Arthur has certain conditions to carry out," he answered. "And his reason, I believe, for keeping her with such an old termagant as Miss Dymond was to avoid the girl's making any particular friendships until his return, and especially to insure her keeping away from the Beresfords until he could read her the letter of instruction that I understand the old colonel left in his hands."

But of course what neither Doctor Bruce nor his wife suspected was that Captain Paget's ward had already set about doing the very thing he supposed he had guarded carefully against.

CHAPTER XXI.

HUNTING AN OTTER.

MARY BRUCE had been right in saying it was rather late to hunt an otter, but in Devonshire the weather is apt to be very warm in September, and this first year of Gladys Ferrol's life in that country of her forefathers the season was unusually advanced. I am inclined to believe that to the young American girl wind and weather would have made little difference, her zest being so keen for any novelty in English life ; and when at five o'clock in the morning Mary looked into the room adjoining hers, where Gladys had slept, she found their visitor already up and nearly dressed, tugging away at the pair of strong boots which Mary had provided for her, and which were certainly the heaviest things of the kind she had ever tried to wear.

Fully equipped, the two girls looked ready even for a plunge among the rocks in some of the Barnford brooks. Gladys wore a short dark flannel gown from Mary's wardrobe, which fitted her tall young figure almost as though it had been made for her. Her own toque, a red silk handkerchief knotted at the throat, and a pair of good dog-skin gloves, *completed the costume.* Frank was lingering restlessly out-

side the dining-room door when the girls came down-stairs, and rushed forward to supply Gladys with the last detail of her hunting equipment. This was a tiny silver whistle which he had fastened on to an old watch-guard, and now presented to Gladys with a mixture of shyness and friendliness, telling her he would teach her how to use it.

A cup of coffee was given to each member of the merry party in the dining-room by the rather sleepy parlor-maid, and then there was a rush to the front door, where Mr. Marchmont's wagonette stood in waiting. Its owner, a brisk, handsome young fellow, just enough older than the rest of the party to seem like a protector, was ready with his morning greeting, and a special welcome for the American cousin. Gladys, as she took the seat assigned to her next to Mr. Tom Marchmont, at once thought of the old lady she had liked so much in London, and wondered if he was a son or nephew; and perhaps he read a question in the eyes fixed so earnestly upon his face, for, as he touched the horses lightly and they started off, he said, in a good-humored voice,

"I believe you met my aunt up in London the other day, Miss Gladys? She wrote to me, and sent a little box for you to my care."

"Oh, did she?" cried Gladys. "How good of her! I liked her so much!" The friendly old face with its pleasant wrinkles, the cheerful voice, the jewelled hands, seemed to flash before her as she thought of the dear old lady's promise to be a fairy godmother.

"I think you'll find the little box up at the Manor-house when you go back," said "Mr. Tom," as they all called him. Gladys wondered what it could contain, while the rest of the party chatted gayly of the chances for sport.

The morning was simply delicious. Every leaf and twig stood out defined against a brilliant sky. The air was full of that wonderful autumnal charm which, blending with all the strength and sweetness of summer-time, makes driving along a fine country road like living out a poem, or imbibing something of the very glory of the season itself.

The wagonette clattered through the silent High Street, where not a soul was visible, and Gladys had all the better chance for observing how quaint and picturesque the old shops and houses really were; how dignified and full of interest the ancient hospital, with its court-yard quivering with the early sunbeams, and gay with the song of birds. Not a "hospitaller" was stirring, of course. The door-ways leading into their various rooms around the court-yard were closed. But while the tall trees and the rich greensward glistened in the sunshine, and the birds twittered in eaves and boughs, who could say on such a morning there was not a sense of life, of waiting animation, everywhere and in everything?

As they whirled past the Manor-house Gladys nodded gayly to its silent windows, thinking not a little ruefully that to-night would see her Miss Dymond's charge again. *But it was impossible for any sober fancies to linger long on such a morning. How beautiful the country looked! Not*

a hint of anything but summer-time about it. They passed the old gray church, with its square tower and peaceful acre full of tombstones, its straight walk with trees arching overhead, its quaint porch and lych-gate; the blacksmith's forge, where some signs of life were visible; a little road-side inn, with long, narrow windows deeply framed and latticed; a few fine houses, about which an air of solid respectability lingered, giving them a marked character of their own. All these suburban features of Barnford interested Gladys, while the vision of the country stretching right and left beyond the outskirts of the town filled her with delight.

Fortunately, she was one of those Americans who know how to walk, and the prospect of investigating this blooming land of rolling fields, of brooks and fells, of ravines and hill-sides, sent the blood coursing through the girl's young veins with much the same consciousness of youth and vitality, of joy in the mere fact of being alive and young and healthy, which Winifred and Janey Beresford possessed—a gift from Dame Nature not to be bought by any money that the richest worldling could command, and whose bonny signals were shown in the roses already coloring Gladys Ferrol's cheeks.

Even Miss Lois and Cousin Bert must have been satisfied could they have seen their little maiden, that fine morning, perched high up by Mr. Marchmont's side, the picture of happy girlish content. She could have sung aloud with the birds that were making the morning festive, and she could and did laugh at the merest little whiffs of jokes which she caught from the boys, who were all in the best of spirits.

The plan was to alight at a certain point on the river where the keeper and the dogs were in waiting; and when they turned a bend in the road Mr. Marchmont leaned forward, declaring he could hear a faint sound of a distant bark or yelp from the hounds. As he did so he caught sight of the little whistle hanging from its ribbon about Gladys's neck.

"Well done!" he exclaimed. "We must teach you how to use that before the day is over."

And Gladys, putting it to her lips, tested its power, the sweet, shrill cry seeming to break the atmosphere like some unexpected note of music.

The sun had flooded the horizon with a multitude of strange and wonderful colors, sending a glow across the dark bosom of the hills, and scattering every sign of morning mist, so that by the time our party reached its destination, although the dew lay thickly on the grassy slopes near to the river, and the cool depths of the woodland might still contain some secrets of the fairies' hour of revel, the open country which the hunting party meant to traverse lay broadly smiling its welcome to the new day. But still there hovered over everything that delightful sense of undisturbed exclusiveness which belongs only to the first hours of the dawn, and the young people had all the pleasure of feeling that the river banks, the crags, the dens where they might hunt their game, belonged for the time being wholly to themselves.

The spot where they were to commence work was a rocky point in the river, and while the keeper and a pack of the

liveliest hounds were hurrying down a slope where they had been waiting, Frank explained to Gladys that the dogs would scent out the otter, and then the chase would begin, and he showed her the long spears which were used in the pursuit. The sight of these weapons troubled Gladys, and she could hardly overcome her horror at the cruelty involved in the sport. Frank begged her to understand that the animal ought to be killed, being so destructive to fish, and her compassion being somewhat turned aside, she was ready enough to join the walking party up the river bank.

The dogs were something like very large Scotch terriers, and they gave out now and then long, deep-toned notes, at which everybody present except herself betrayed signs of the greatest interest. While old "Tewkesbury," the veteran of the pack, was still prancing about the roots of some trees at the water's edge, Mr. Marchmont called out that the party must divide, and each one go to his allotted place—one half on one side of the bank, the other opposite. Frank declared at once for the party to which Mary and Gladys still belonged, promising to look after the girls, even though he should miss some of the sport thereby.

The "seal," or footmark, of the otter was searched for, the hounds dashing about, trying the ground, and in and out of the water. Some of the party were sent ahead to distant fords, and to keep an eye on the pools in the stream where the otter would be likely to rise for a "vent," or breath of air, for he is such a capital swimmer that the only way to secure him is to head him off at such a moment.

It was certainly a picture worth seeing—a morning worth remembering. Off they start, the dogs worrying around old tree-roots, or plunging into the water—the party keeping well to work, Gladys and Mary, with Frank, still in spotless white flannel and knickerbockers, at their side, scanning the country, smiling at the long “bo-o-o” of the hounds, and yet talking eagerly to Gladys, who at this point felt herself equal to miles of such walk and amusement.

The method of the dogs interested her greatly, for they seemed almost human in their understanding of the situation, and whether they swam together in a close group (Philters, the keeper, following, up to his waist in water), or scattered here and there in the search, Gladys could readily appreciate Frank's enthusiasm over the sport. Now and again a shout from a distant member of the party was heard; Tewkesbury or “Champagne Charlie,” another wiseacre among the hounds, had given an alarm. Then there came the wild excitement of the sight of the otter “venting,” while half a dozen men and boys plunged forward into the stream. The dogs were wildly careering about, but it was too late. Master Otter had dipped down, and was doing his “ten miles an hour,” as Frank said, while the pursuers lost themselves in an intricate bend of the stream, and the actual hunters started on a run which left the girls behind.

“Never mind,” cried Frank, loyally. “They’ve lots of work ahead of them. We may come up to them yet. Here, Mary, let’s go into the Priory lane. I know they will show *again at the mill corner*, and we can cut across.”

No sooner said than done. The words quickened Gladys's steps. As Frank led the way up the bank, and pushed open a little wicket-gate, the girl had a swift consciousness for the first time of setting foot on her own possessions. She paused long enough to take in an impression of the well-ordered park—the rich, comfortable look of everything, of which the deep green verdure and even the blooming hedges—rows skirting the lane seemed a part. There was a thrill of delight, a happy consciousness of possession, stirring her pulses as she followed Mary and Frank in their rapid walk down the lane and across a bit of the open country, and thence, with some halts to recover breath, down to a craggier bend in the river than that which they had left; and here signs of the chase became more exciting. Up through the glen dashed the dogs, with Philters, the keeper; Tewkesbury, with a loud note, plunged into the water; the hunting party appeared along the banks; the keeper's horn sounded; and in the midst of all this animation Frank had a chance to say that the otter had been scented.

“The old fish-monger slipped them at Hardley Holm,” he said, eagerly, “but we'll have him later. Hurry on, girls. No, Gladys; you are looking tired.”

“Not very,” cried Gladys, eyes and ears eager for all that was before and around her. The dogs were rushing wildly about; some of them stirring up roots near the water's edge, others following in the wake of Champagne Charlie, whose swift movements were very suggestive of a “find.” On in this fashion they went for another mile, the boys

going in and out of the shallow water, the girls keeping to the bank. The sun was high in the heavens; a glorious day was full upon them; and if they had stopped to calculate time or distance, they would have found that they had traversed at least four miles of country, although they had "doubled" the ground, and were still not far from the Priory woods, or that bit of hollow where the mill known as Rollis was situated. Suddenly a cry goes up. Philters, with Mr. Tom, Lionel, and half a dozen others after him, darted into the middle of the stream, blowing a blast on his horn.

"There he is!" "We have him!" "Take care, Gladys!" These utterances mingled with the loud notes of the dogs, and Gladys, who had ventured out upon a stone seemingly secure in the water, turned a little aside while the spears and the hounds were at work. The otter was a hard fighter; the death-struggle was long; but just as the keeper emerged and flung the animal upon the bank there was a new commotion. In her excitement Gladys's foot had lost its hold upon the rocks, and the next moment she was floundering in the water, with half a dozen people, men and boys, rushing to her relief.

CHAPTER XXII.

COUSINS.

THE Mill House stood in a pleasant hollow just below the Priory woods, its stream spanned by a tiny bridge. The old walls of the mill formed a picturesque angle, while the house itself had the air of farm and cottage so agreeably combined that the cackling of fowls and the barking of dogs were not out of place, and the sanded parlor and the fresh little kitchen, presided over by Mrs. Jewson, the miller's wife, and a curly-headed boy fishing contentedly in a bend of the stream, seemed in keeping with the peaceful cosiness of the place.

Our party, with poor Gladys dripping wet, and yet much more inclined to laugh than to cry, came upon Mrs. Jewson very soon after Gladys's adventure in the water. Mary Bruce, the anxious one of the party, hastened forward, not forgetting, however, her pretty manners, while she suggested that "Miss Ferrol, Colonel Dymond's heiress" (in a parenthesis), be given a warm bed for a while, a hot drink, etc.

Mrs. Jewson was all hospitality at once. Her assistant, Debby Ailings, a stout, rosy-cheeked maid, was despatched to a clothes-press, while Frank insisted on keeping Gladys

moving, and was very amusing, pretending she was an otter they had been long searching for, making mild plunges in her direction with his spear, until, from sheer inability to laugh any more, she begged him to stop.

"You are a very grand person in Mrs. Jewson's eyes, Gladys," the boy whispered, with a comical look. "She is your tenant. Your name is a passport to—lavender sheets, hot milk, and all sorts of attentions. Look around, fair maiden from the West, and behold your new inheritance stretching fair and ample, rich and fertile. Doesn't that sound Hiawathian? You will disappoint Mrs. Jewson if you don't look a little Indian, you know."

"I'm such a sweet-looking heiress now," said Gladys, in high glee, "I might execute a war-dance step or two."

"Thy curling locks are strangely damp and *stringy*, so to speak, my Indian cousin," he went on, while they moved about in the sunshine, "and the wild waters have made thy garments, O my Evangeline, cling. But thy whistle, where is it?"

"Gone!" cried Gladys, forgetting all her fun, as she put up her hand for her little silver treasure.

"Then it shall be found, even if these Saxon limbs shiver a week in yonder waters," exclaimed Frank, and he would have darted off then and there but for the diversion of Mary's appearance with a motherly air of anxiety for the damp Indian princess, and Gladys was carried off into a charming little lavender-scented bedroom, where, after a comfortable *bath, much more to her liking than her plunge into Barn-*

ford stream, she found herself in a delicious bed, downy, fresh, and reposeful. A cup of tea and toast went far towards refreshing her; and Mary, advising sleep as the surest tonic for mind and body, went away to join the others at the breakfast which Mr. Tom Marchmont had ordered the day before.

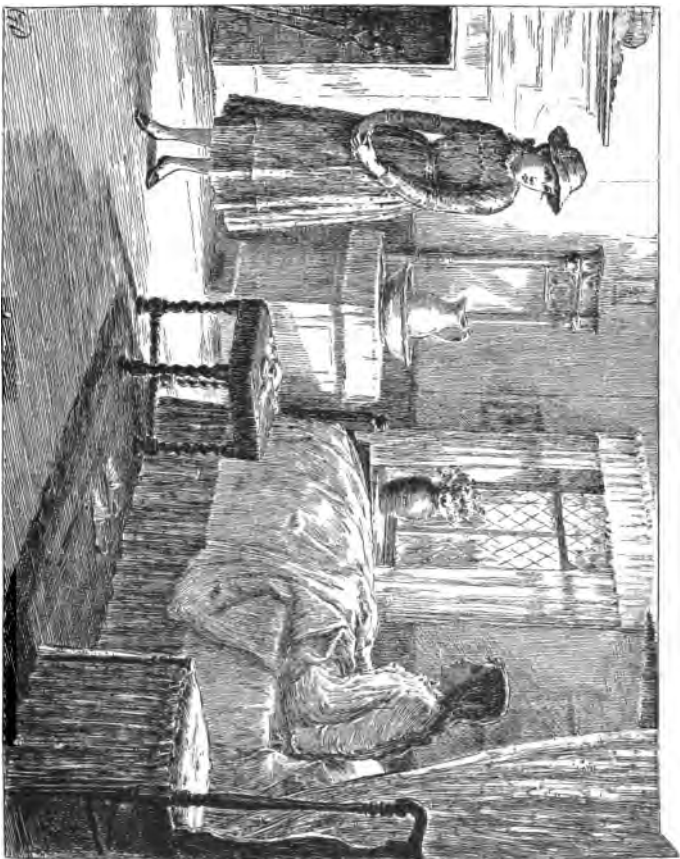
Mrs. Jewson came in and out with friendliest, although very deferential, inquiries. She was full of curiosity concerning the little mistress of the Priory—anxious to see the “American;” and if Gladys had not made her first appearance in quite the most dignified manner, the sweet simplicity of her manners, her fine-speaking face, her merry, whole-hearted laugh had gone far towards establishing her in Mrs. Jewson’s favor. And the young face on the great soft white pillow, a trifle pale, but very pretty to look at, had about it that unmistakable air of refinement which Mrs. Jewson knew how to prize. As the miller’s wife went away for the last time she had decided “the American” was “a little lady.”

The door was closed. Gladys lay still, enjoying this delicious sense of repose, soothing and grateful to every sense, after her early walk and run and novel excitement of the morning. It was with a sense of being soothed also that she let her gaze rove idly about the room, taking in its homely old-fashioned comforts, the high chimney-piece, the chintz-covered chairs, the great chest of drawers with brass handles, and the long oaken box or press. The window was very pretty to look at. It had little beaded panes, and one of them *was swinging* open, letting in all sorts of delicious gar-

den fragrances, sweet scents of the morning. From the other side of the house came the sound of gay voices and merry peals of laughter. They were evidently enjoying themselves highly, and Gladys would have laughed gayly enough with them, but she liked best being here, the gentle drowsiness that was stealing over her being mingled with all sorts of delightful reflections.

As an offset to Miss Dymond's scorn of America, to the loneliness and strangeness she felt, Gladys was getting more and more used to the idea that she was really of importance; that all of this—the cosey, delightful room, for instance, this picturesque old mill, that richly flowered lane down which she and Frank had run, clinging to each other's hands, in the early morning, were all actually *hers*, to own or to give away; at all events, to be known by. Naturally enough she let these half-waking, wholly delightful fancies of hers drift away to those people whose very name was so fascinating a magnet to her, and Gladys, who had not read many “grown-up” novels, began to wonder what her favorite heroines would do under the circumstances. Visions of her beloved Jo in “Little Women,” of Ethel in the “Daisy Chain,” of Susan Coolidge's Katy, floated before her eyes—pleasant shapes, with familiar eyes and beckoning hands, suggesting something heroic, generous, and surprising; something that should make that wonderful Captain Paget feel sure his American ward was not deficient in noble instincts.

And with it all was the real Ferrol generosity—the same *impulse* that had made Gladys, as a little child, give away



“OH, I BEG YOUR PARDON,” SHE SAID, VERY MUCH CONFUSED.

her sash ribbons, her coral necklace, her bronze boots, with never a sigh over the sacrifice. Yes; quietly and without giving any warning she would make use of her new power, and then— Did she fall asleep? Had she been asleep? Gladys started up, stretched out her arm, was conscious of a high noonday sun, and of something much more surprising—the figure of a tall girl in a cotton gown, and wearing a shabby straw hat, who, from her station near the chimney-piece, was looking at her with a half-startled, half-embarrassed gaze.

“Why! I’ve been asleep,” said Gladys, very much confused, and wondering when she had once before encountered this stranger’s gaze. The girl was fair-haired and blue-eyed, and with an earnest face that betokened more than mere prettiness of color and feature.

She drew back a step or two, blushing furiously.

“Oh, I beg your pardon!” she said, very much confused by Gladys’s awakening. “Mrs. Jewson said you were asleep, and—I wanted so much to see you.”

Gladys laughed outright. “Did you?” she said.

The girl stood still a moment, wondering what to say or do with herself, conscious of her intrusion, and yet inclined to be a trifle defiant.

“But after all,” she exclaimed, suddenly, and moving a very little nearer the bed, “I supposed I had some sort of right to—look at you; we are cousins. I am—Janey Beresford.”

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE FIRST GUEST.

THE effect of this announcement upon Gladys was startling. She sat up, forgetting that she was enveloped in a dimity dressing-gown belonging to Mrs. Jewson, and looked at the visitor with eager, dancing eyes. It seemed like an answer to her thoughts to behold a Beresford actually in the flesh in this first moment of awakening, but Gladys could hardly realize that it was not a dream.

"Janey Beresford!" she exclaimed. "But where—where is the—other one?"

It was Janey's turn to be bewildered. "Whom do you mean?" she said, anxiously.

"Why, the one I saw in Liverpool."

"Oh," cried Janey, coming nearer, and with a swift rush of color in her cheeks, "did you recognize Winifred?—that was my sister. I—I am only Janey."

"How perfectly delightful!" said Gladys, in accents so unmistakably cordial that the other girl felt all her embarrassment vanishing. She laughed in answer to Gladys Ferrol's smile, and forgot all about her defiance; and indeed it *was not hard for two girls of the same age, and full of life*

and vigor, and both rather oppressed by the conditions of their lives, to make acquaintance. In ten minutes they had gone through the necessary preliminaries. Janey had explained her being there by saying she had come over to thank Mrs. Jewson for a hamper of fresh eggs and cream, and Gladys had related her adventure of the morning. Then the talk drifting on to more personal topics, it came out that Gladys had not yet seen the Priory.

"Your own place too!" cried Janey. "Oh, I would not have wasted an hour; I would have explored every room. Why, it has such a history! Once Queen Elizabeth slept there, and William of Orange, they say, too, and before him Charles the First."

"Dear me!" cried Gladys. She had never thought of herself as the heir to such traditions. "Oh, why can't I go up and see the house now?"

Janey's eyes danced, but she looked a little doubtful.

"Mrs. Jewson has the key," she said. "It was a great show-place before the old Earl Montescue died. The Montescues were very poor, and they had to sell it, you know."

"I don't know," said Gladys, who was dressing quickly. "I only know it's—mine."

Janey sighed.

"I wish you'd tell me something," Gladys said, looking at her companion eagerly. "Come; you *shall* tell me. Why—why did old Colonel Dymond leave it all to me? You must know what I mean?"

But Janey shrank back in dismay. She had forgotten all

about her father in the first flush of delight over meeting Gladys, and finding her so "nice;" but this was different.

"Oh, I cannot!" she exclaimed. "It is a long story. Papa would not like it. Never mind. You have it and we haven't; that's all."

"But you think it mean of me?" said Gladys, almost with tears in her eyes.

"It was not your fault," said Janey, quickly. "If we are sorry about anything, it is for the boys. Arthur, the eldest, is *so* clever, and so is Don; but what can they do, poor things, without a penny? Arthur is going up to London now. He had a chance to go there, and he is working—oh, so hard!"

Gladys listened intently to every word.

"He is an artist," said the little sister, proudly. "He is a perfect genius, and he draws pictures for a Sunday magazine now. He has the real artistic temperament, mamma says, without too much of the melancholy part of it. Sometimes, you know," said this young philosopher, "people who are geniuses are morbid, just as Shelley and Keats and even Byron, were. But Arthur is not like that. He is as full of fun as he can be, and he always tries to make the best of everything. And then he is very handsome—a real Beresford, every one says."

Gladys was absorbed in all of this, and felt as though she could have listened to Janey Beresford talk by the hour.

Winnie would not have thought of giving her confidences so *quickly*. *She would have exchanged a word or two with the*

American cousin, and then for all the tumult of her feelings have fled homeward. But Janey, the little "whirlwind," was different. She gave no heed to consequences, and plunged at once into this delightful and unexpected intercourse. And Gladys was fascinated by Janey's familiar mention of the poets.

"Oh, do you like poetry?" asked Gladys. She knew something of poor Keats's story, and she had learned Byron's "Hebrew Melodies" by heart.

Janey nodded.

"Of course," she said; "we both like it. When Arthur has a studio of his own, Winifred and I mean to read poetry aloud to him while he paints; or perhaps Winnie will sing and play nocturnes to him. We read of an artist whose wife used to do that, and it made him paint wonderfully."

"Do you know 'The Assyrians came down?'" inquired Gladys.

"Oh, 'like a wolf on the fold!'" continued Janey, who could hardly have been her father's daughter without being acquainted with whatever was fine and stirring in verse.

"Yes," said Gladys. "'And their cohorts were gleaming with purple and gold.' What *are* cohorts, I wonder?" she added, just a little doubtfully—"eyes, weren't they?"

Janey burst into a peal of laughter, and as she cried, "Oh, armies—bands of men!" Gladys joined too, forgetting to quote any more poetry or talk of Lord Byron.

"Come," she said, finally, "we will go into my house, Janey, you and I. Won't it be fun? I don't care what

Miss Dymond says — even if her eyes are gleaming with purple and gold when I get back. Dear me! wasn't that *too* funny?"

Mrs. Jewson did not object to taking down the key to the side entrance of the Priory for Gladys, and she probably had no idea of the tumult in the young girl's mind as Gladys followed her across the little bridge and up the side path which led to a gate-way in a privet hedge. The gate closed upon them. Gladys drew a full breath and looked about her. There was a fine garden, and beyond this a lawn like green velvet, and richly shaded by trees. They were approaching from the left side, but Gladys could see that the lawn stretched away around the front of the old house, whose irregular turrets soon came in view. She was surprised to find that the long avenue leading from the main entrance ended somewhat abruptly in a hedge with a little iron gate, and the house itself opened into a rose garden, which toned down the sense of overpowering grandeur which such a fine place might have produced.

For it *was* a grand old place. The two girls—one a Beresford, entitled to an instinct of pride and delight in it, the other only a Ferrol, an "American interloper," as Mr. Beresford had said—stood still, just as they came in full view of the gracious proportions, looking up with faces all aglow, eyes eagerly alight. And "Is it mine?" Gladys was asking herself, while "It is all hers" was almost on Janey's very lips.

Mrs. Jewson had no sentimental fancies of any kind. She

had known the Priory in its days of splendor, when the Montescues were great county people, and when the house was closed it was but right and proper that she should be intrusted with one of the keys. She took an honest pride in everything pertaining to it, well pleased that "one of the old families" had purchased it when Jack Montescue came to grief in the hunting-field, and it was found that he had only debts to leave his heir. But Mrs. Jewson had no nonsense about it in her mind. She had no idea at all that this was Gladys's first introduction to the old place, or she would certainly not have ventured to be the cicerone; and as for the tumult occupying both girls' minds—that conflict in Gladys's heart and conscience about right and wrong in her inheritance which was likely to give Captain Paget more trouble than he could guess—that impulse of affection and attraction towards Gladys, and the little feeling of regret and defiance which made Janey, as she would have put it, "nearly wild"—of all this Mrs. Jewson guessed nothing at all. She rubbed the key against the side of her gown before fitting it into the lock, and said something about doors being too long closed.

"Of course you know, miss," she said to Gladys, "the captain has sent me orders to have the whole house aired and looked to every week, and my day for that is to-morrow."

"Oh yes," cried Gladys. She knew they were entering by the side door, but she was impatient to stand within her own house, perhaps her home. And what was the dust of a week to one who was thinking of two hundred years ago?

When Mrs. Jewson pushed the door back and moved to one side, Gladys nearly flew past her into a large light corridor, with casements running all along the side, and ending in a short wide flight of steps. But the next moment she turned and held her hand out to Janey Beresford.

"Come in ! come in !" she cried, gayly. " You are my first visitor, and I am *so* glad it's you."

CHAPTER XXIV.

A FASCINATING ANCESTOR.

WHAT would either Miss Dymond or Mr. Beresford have said could they have seen the two girls during the next half hour? Even Mrs. Jewson had some doubts as to the propriety of what she had done when she caught some of the sentences that they uttered, and saw Gladys's eager desire to have Janey talk and show her everything.

"Where shall we go first?" Gladys said, at the foot of the little staircase. "We can't stay long, you know, because—because Mary Bruce will be coming for me, and it is such a great big old house. Come, Janey, you lead the way."

"Very well," returned Janey, who liked her American cousin better all the time. "Let us go up here. This is the music-room, but once it was a chapel."

They found themselves in a long room, with an arched ceiling richly carved and frescoed, with one great window at the lower end, and a gallery which held a reed organ. There was stained glass, which always gives a delightful air of mystery to the light and shade of a room, and a shining oaken floor, and hangings of pale yellow silk, while three or four musical instruments and stands, a set of shelves, and

a few light seats completed the appointments. Midway in the room a flight of steps led down into the main hall-way of the house, and here Gladys could not refrain from an exclamation of delight. The hall was large and high, its lines broken by deep curving windows, by a fireplace, and the sweep of an oaken staircase at one side; but what charmed the little mistress of the Priory most was its look of antique splendor: something, she could not define what, which did not set any of the comforts or cosinesses of to-day at defiance, rather warmed them with its glow, and yet made her feel the power of all that traditionary greatness of which Janey Beresford had spoken. The Montescues were cousins of the Dymonds, and the little American girl, stepping softly down the staircase from the old music-room into this beautiful dim old hall, with its family portraits and ancient windows, felt herself thrilled by a sense that in some fashion she belonged to it all as much as it belonged to her. Not a tinge of disloyalty to her own land was in this—rather was it that acceptance of one's forefathers which all Americans may feel in England, and yet be devoutly grateful for the Fourth of July, 1776.

"Come," cried Janey, wondering a little why Gladys lingered. "We shall have time to see the drawing-room—it is a dear old room."

Gladys felt herself like some one in a dream as she allowed Janey to lead her forward down the little flight of stairs, across the beautiful hall, and into the drawing-room. The door was opened by a push from energetic Janey, who on

her side felt something of the romantic fervor which had awed Gladys Ferrol into silence. It was all like a book to her whereof the beginning was dated away back, perhaps in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, and the most interesting part of the "plot" just growing now.

"Isn't it a dear old room?" she continued. "It is not *too* large, like the drawing-room at Balklands, the Duke of St. Maur's place. One could really be sociable here."

"Oh, *Janey!*" cried Gladys.

Words failed her. She stood still again, all impulse of movement checked by the room in which she found herself, and yet her mind was fairly spinning with thought. The proportions of the room, as Janey had suggested, were not so great as to deprive it of all air of homeliness or sociability, yet there was an impression of splendid width—a luxuriousness of space, as it were—which the rather low ceiling prevented from being overpowering. Like the other windows on this floor, those in the drawing-room were large and round, sweeping outward with a gracious curve, their casements reaching to a low bordering of wainscot, along which the ledge of a little seat ran, covered in green plush that had faded to a much prettier hue than it could have been originally.

A long line of Montescues and Dymonds had inhabited this room, each generation contributing something to its elegance or comfort or its luxuriousness, and the impress of many minds and fancies lay upon everything—the quaint furniture of one period mingling delightfully with

the modern upholsteries of another; curious forms in bric-à-brac, rich, soft colors and fabrics; tables and chairs, cabinets and pictures, each having its own story to tell to the little maiden who for the first time stood among them—their new mistress, who was bringing so much of the enthusiasm of romance to her possessions that it made up for any sense of traditionary greatness which she lacked. Gladys knew nothing at all about Watteau, very little about the French court in which minuets were danced, or she would have been struck then by an impression which the beautiful old room gave her later of its being a place for courtly courtesying, for the stately favors and movements of some such dance. Across the shining, polished space in the centre of the room one might fancy a girl of the “patch-and-powder” period—a girl in a flowered gown, with high-heeled slippers, a fan, a pompadour arrangement of the hair, moving in slow and pretty measure, coming forward with smiling eyes and lips, with some dainty bit of coquetry in look or word to greet this little nineteenth-century kinswoman, in whose silence and suspended animation was a thrill of pride and bewilderment, of romance and sudden enthusiasm, for all the departed traditions and glories of the house.

The portraits on the wall seemed to give her a welcome. Gladys felt a trifle timid about them, they represented such a splendid-looking set of ancestors, and seemed in some way so confident of themselves, with their brave attire, their jewels, their ruffles and laces, their smiles, or the repose of superiority in their painted faces. But one of them caught her



THE PORTRAITS ON THE WALL SEEMED TO GIVE HER A WELCOME.

fancy suddenly, made her forget everything else, as, standing still, she suddenly encountered a pair of brown eyes in a picture at the lower end of the room.

"Oh, that is Sir Guy Montescue, of the court of George III.," cried Gladys's eager little guide. She knew all about these silent occupants of the Priory, but there were suggestions in this picture which brought a new glow to her animated young face. "I am so glad you noticed him at once, for Arthur, my brother, is said to be his living image. Of course we are connections, but doesn't it seem queer? Why, one day, when Arthur was a little boy, old Lord Montescue brought him into this room and made him stand by the picture, and there were a great lot of people here who all declared the likeness wonderful. Isn't he handsome? Do you know, he was called the Chevalier Bayard of King George's court. And he died when he was only two-and-twenty! He was a staunch Jacobite; mamma knows a song about him."

"Oh, I *wish* I knew all his story!" exclaimed Gladys. And Arthur—the genius who was like and yet not like Keats and Shelley and other famous people, and who already appealed to her imagination in the light of a hero—he was exactly like him. Gladys lifted her eyes again, taking in every line and color of the picture. A young man in a costume of pale blue satin, with ruffles of rich lace, diamond knee-buckles, a broad blue ribbon across his breast, and a glittering star, was depicted there in the flush of manly beauty. The bright brown hair, drawn back from his brow and tied in a queue, no doubt, was ignorant of powder; the eyes, merry,

and yet with a lurking hint of melancholy in their depths, were brown or deepest hazel; the nose inclined a very little to the aquiline, with fine sensitive curves; the mouth and chin were perfect in outline, though vigorous and betokening resolution; while about the whole picture lingered an ineffable charm—something suggestive of the soldier rather than the courtier, the hero rather than the man of the world. And looking into the noble young face, one would not find it hard to believe that he was one of the loyal adherents of a stricken cause; a Jacobite because he loved his people; a follower of the chevalier because he believed that he was his king, and that drawing the sword in his cause was “Rendering unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar’s.”

All sorts of heroic, romantic fancies seemed to the little mistress of the Priory to cluster around this former owner of the old place, and she wondered vaguely, if they might not be transferred to that unknown kinsman of hers, the Arthur who was his “living image.” To invest a nineteenth-century lad of eighteen with the heroism, the bravery, the daring of one of the youths who went out with Prince Charlie, simply because of his heritage of gay brown eyes and a fine clear-cut young face, was rather hazardous, but somehow Gladys allowed herself to do so. She felt all her interest in Arthur Beresford quickened. He was, he *must* be, a hero, and the picture of the young nobleman of George III.’s day seemed in a sort of fashion the portrait of her cousin. Fanciful as *it was*, it made everything at once seem to Gladys more real. *The dark eyes, with that mingling of mirth and melancholy,*

that look which characterized the spirit of the young Jacobite, seemed to be appealing to her for something—sympathy, comprehension; or was it tenderness for the Beresfords, who in their living estate were nearly as hapless as he had been, dying with his face turned towards the chevalier's, his hand clasping the miniature of his young wife that hung in the little gallery up-stairs? Gladys could hardly say exactly what it made her feel, yet she was conscious of offering in her heart a vow of allegiance of some kind. She was thrilled by all she had seen, was eager to be on good terms with Sir Guy Montescue and with his kinsman Arthur. She felt as if she would like to explain to Sir Guy all about her own position here. But Janey was eager to go on.

"Come, come," she said, softly, putting her hand on Gladys's arm. Then suddenly she dropped it with a little cry of dismay. She retreated a step or two among the shadows, but kept her gaze fastened upon the door.

Gladys turned swiftly.

There stood Miss Dymond, her face pale with anger, her eyes "gleaming" in almost as overpowering a manner as the "cohorts" Gladys and Janey had laughed over half an hour before. Mrs. Jewson was trying to make an explanation.

CHAPTER XXV.

A TALISMAN AND A VOW.

ANGER held Miss Dymond silent; but, as we all know, there are many ways more potent than speech of making such sentiments known, and Gladys felt like a physical pain the scorn and indignation which darted from the old lady's glance, passing her own silent figure to that of Janey Beresford. That the root of Miss Dymond's anger lay in the fact of Janey's presence roused our little heroine to a spirit of defiance she could not otherwise have felt. She was hurt, wounded, mortified, on Janey's account, and her very first movement was an almost involuntary one. She linked her arm in Janey's, giving the latter a little quick sympathetic pressure.

"What is the matter, Miss Dymond?" she said at last.

"Gladys," said the old lady, "come home. I don't know what to say. As for you, Jane Beresford, is this all the pride you have? Do you know no better, girl, than to force your acquaintance upon—Colonel Dymond's niece?"

"Oh!" cried Janey. She flung herself away from Gladys and looked at Miss Dymond, white with the feeling she *could not put into words*. Poor Janey! She was only a

child in years, and she knew the story of the family feuds too imperfectly to be sure of what Miss Dymond had in her mind, but she had all the fine, delicate sense of high-breeding, which Jean Rothsay's daughter could not fail to inherit, and this was stung and outraged.

"Miss Dymond," cried Gladys, not caring for anything but to make amends to Janey, "I don't care anything about being Colonel Dymond's niece, if it means that I am to be rude to—to my cousins. Janey *never* forced her acquaintance on me. I *wanted* to know her—and Winifred too; and I shall always be their friend: and isn't this house mine? Have I no right to come into it with my cousin?"

Gladys was driven wild between her indignation and her innate sense of politeness and deference.

It is not pleasant to have an eye fairly quivering with disapproval on you when you are indulging in sentiment, and for all her loyalty to the Beresfords, Gladys felt decidedly uncomfortable. But Janey understood. She wrung Gladys's hand, and returned her kiss with eager demonstration, and then, with a little bow to Miss Dymond, she rushed away through the music-room and out of the house.

How she passed the next half-hour Gladys hardly knew. Conscious that Miss Dymond was trying to create a return to the commonplace by her talk with Mrs. Jewson as they crossed the gardens and the little bridge, she was yet well aware of the undercurrent of complete disapproval of herself. But she felt that it was unjust, that it was the outcome of the old lady's personal hostility to those poorer

cousins, and every generous instinct in the girl's nature was roused to link itself with the spirit of opposition which she felt for everything that Miss Dymond suggested. Polite?—oh yes, she would be polite, thought the young girl, as she walked along, holding her head high, but quivering with suppressed agitation. Why had Captain Paget sent her to the care of this old lady—to a house where it was so evident she was unwelcome? Oh, for an hour with Cousin Bert! And Gladys began framing an impetuous letter to America which should be written that very day.

The Manor-house carriage was in waiting at the Mill House. Gladys's good-bys were brief, and she was soon speeding away opposite Miss Dymond, who maintained a silence more portentous than words. Once in the house, Gladys fully expected the storm to break. But Miss Dymond only said, in her iciest tones, "I shall have to watch you for myself, I see. Go up to your room, if you please, until dinner."

For an instant Gladys hesitated at the foot of the stairs, divided between an impulse to pour forth questions, defiance, and sorrow, and a sense that silence was her best weapon of defence. The latter triumphed. She knew she was being unjustly treated. She knew Miss Dymond felt a scorn for her, but she walked away too conscious of it all to think mere words worth while. And she said to herself, "It is only for six months," but with an intention of settling certain points very securely before her guardian's return.

It was with a sudden revulsion of feeling that the first

object Gladys's eyes encountered on her dressing-table was the little box Lady Marchmont had sent down to her. She opened it eagerly, but with trembling fingers. There was a little note, written on a tiny sheet of paper bearing the Marchmont crest and coat of arms, and a motto which she later understood and cared for: "*Fides non timet*"—faith fears not.

"MY DEAR GLADYS" (the note ran),—"I send you a ring which I want you to wear in remembrance of your dear grandmother, Gladys Dymond, as well as of your Fairy Godmother. Your grandmother gave it to me on my fifteenth birthday. I shall hope to see you in London in the spring. Meanwhile believe in my affectionate thoughts of you, and know that I am always your faithful friend,

"ANNABELLA MARCHMONT."

Gladys read the note twice before she took out the little faded case of red velvet in which lay the ring—a hoop of two bars of gold, with small sapphires shining across one half of it. It was exquisitely beautiful, quaint, and with something dignified about it, and Gladys, still standing at her dressing-table, slipped it on the third finger of her left hand, lifting it up to the light, where the stones glittered and quivered like living things. The ring—the sense of possession of it fascinated her, and tranquillized all her ruffled feelings. After all, she could remember she had a "Fairy Godmother," even over here in her strange new home. Had she not now a most positive proof and a talis-

man in that little gold and gemmed circlet on her "heart" finger? and because of this happy ending to the morning Cousin Bert received a letter with nothing vindictive in it; only a pleasant account of her glimpse of the Priory with "one of my new cousins, whom I like best of all—Janey Beresford. Only think, she reads all kinds of poetry, and is full of fun."

But this was not the only consolation that eventful day offered. Gladys spent the afternoon for the most part on her little plush chair, reading a volume of poetry which she had discovered, containing some "selections" from Keats and Shelley, conscious that Miss Dymond's silence meant disapproval, and glad that some visitors appeared at tea-time. But the hour after that meal was becoming unendurable, when happily Miss Dymond was summoned to her store-room on some errand of house-keeping importance. Gladys jumped up, letting a sigh of relief escape her, and ran out into the garden. Enough of daylight remained to make a little run there desirable, but she was scarcely on the terrace before the note of a sweet, shrill whistle caught her ear—the same, although from more practised lips, with which she had broken the charmed stillness of the morning. The little girl stopped short in her run down the terrace, listened, detected whence the sound came, just as Master Frank's yellow head appeared above the hedge-row skirting the box walk below the terrace. Gladys flew to welcome him.

"Oh, Frank!" she exclaimed, "do come in. Is that my *whistle*? *How good of you!*"

But Frank shook his head, and retreating a few steps into the lane, began to dance absurdly, whistling a wild sort of tune.

"No," he said at last; "I dare not let Dicksie Dymond have her fling at me to-night. It was my fault you were left alone so long. I was to go back and tell them as soon as you woke up, but I was looking for the whistle, and let time slip."

Gladys leaned over the hedge and said, in a pleasant voice, "Well, I'm decidedly obliged to you. I saw the Priory, and oh, Frank, I *wish* I was eighteen!"

"Well, it's a wish that's bound to come true some of these days. By that time I will be deciding, or having it decided, whether I'm worth sending to Oxford, and you will be a fine young lady, airing your splendors, and turning up your nose at your poor relations."

"Just wait and see. Give me my darling whistle."

"Perhaps I'd better get a promise out of you first," said the boy, looking very quizzical. "Promise you'll go otter-hunting with me the first summer you are—set free."

"And fall into Barnford River again?"

"We'll try and prevent that; but no matter. Promise, or you're not worth the whistle."

Gladys laughed, and stretched her hand across the hedge. "I promise," she said, obediently.

Frank made a magic sort of circle in the air with the whistle, and then laid it in the girl's palm.

"Do you see that star fixing you with its eye?" he said, directing Gladys's gaze upward to where the evening-star

showed like a fair jewel above the dusky green of the trees and the twilight earth. "That shall be our witness. Let us see ; four years from this twelfth day of September you hunt an otter with me or give back the whistle. Is that agreed?"

"Agreed," echoed Gladys. It was her second vow to-day, for the other, although registered in silence, and only to the beatings of her own heart, was, she felt, as surely a promise. Mercury witnessed this merry pledge, and the dark eyes of Prince Charlie's young captain had looked on while she made the other ; but Gladys felt a certain solemnity about both, in spite of Frank's quizzical gaze and the smile lurking about the corners of his mouth. The sombre, beautiful drawing-room at the Priory, with the sunshine let in by Janey's hand, the lane with its darkling shadows and prim-rose glow of evening, always recurred to her mind when the two pledges involving fidelity to her strange kinsfolk were remembered, and it was not in Gladys Ferrol's nature to be disloyal even to an association. She smiled across the hedge at the boy, and said, gently,

"The star may witness it ; it is a promise," and drawing her hand back, slipped the cord of the little whistle around her neck. But when she lifted her eyes again she and the star were alone. Frank, after turning a back somersault down the slope beyond the lane, had disappeared, and Miss Dymond's voice calling "Gladys Ferrol" seemed to reach the dimmest recesses of the garden.

CHAPTER XXVI.

MICKLEHAM SQUARE.

ABOUT four o'clock on a certain January day Winifred Beresford found herself alighting at the Paddington Station in London, a sense of confusion and the novelty of her position overpowering her for a few moments, so that she could only stand still and look about her in a dazed sort of fashion. The train, rushing wildly into the gloom and half-lights of the station, seemed to have startled into life all sorts of animation—a bewildering activity which made the little Devonshire maiden feel almost like flying back to Barnford again. But her journey, which was the result of much planning and contriving on the part of dear ones at home, was too important a one to end in this humiliating way.

Arthur had suggested it, and Mrs. Cleves's commissions for her during her week in town made it possible; and Arthur's landlady, a good-hearted Scotchwoman, with daughters of her own, had promised to look after the young girl while she was in her brother's lodgings. Altogether it promised limitless fascinations; for even to walk about the streets of the old city would have repaid Winifred for any toil the

journey involved. And to be with Arthur, to see him actually at his work—was not that joy enough, to say nothing of the more exciting visions which certain hints in Arthur's letters had conjured up?

Winifred's good spirits were just beginning to sink low when she caught sight of a well-known young face peering about in the gloom; a pair of fine shoulders; then at last Arthur had pushed himself through the crowd, and was striding forward, his hand out-stretched, his eyes smiling, while his voice sounded like the veriest music to the little sister.

"Holloa, old girl, I got belated! All right? Well, it's nice to see you! Come, we'll have a cab. Where's the rest of your luggage?"

There was only a little trunk besides the bag that Winifred was gripping with both hands, as though she was afraid it would be infected by the animation around her and fly away. But Arthur possessed himself speedily of this treasure, and led the way out, holding one of Winifred's hands securely until she was safe in the cab, when he and she drew long breaths of satisfaction as they scrutinized each other very critically.

Arthur, as Janey had said, was indeed the living image of the young captain, Sir Guy Montescue, whose acquaintance Gladys had made that eventful day in September. He had the same clear-cut features, waving dark hair, and deep-toned hazel eyes, with a gleam in them of almost reckless gayety, which, however, found its balance in the lines of the firm *young mouth*. Arthur Beresford's lips, with their quiet,

self-contained curves, contradicted the look of irrepressible youth and light-heartedness which made the upper part of the face so sunny, but happily there was nothing in their boyish composure which indicated cynicism or bitterness. The lad had started forth to face the battle of life with an armor which would have made such sentiments impossible.

"You are thin, Arthur," was Winnie's first exclamation.

"Well, hard work must tell somewhere, I suppose," said the boy. "Would you like me to look like Daniel Moffat down at Barnford?"

Winifred laughed; for Daniel was the show fat boy of Barnford.

"No. Oh, Arthur, you are as silly as ever. What a lot there is to tell! How long it is since I saw you! Of course they all sent their love, and there are fresh eggs and things in the hamper, and I am to write at once and tell them all about it."

"The eggs and things—that will be interesting, won't it? Now, Winnie, this is really London Town which you are in. Though you are not the Bailiff's Daughter of Islington, I don't doubt but that things will interest you quite as much as they did that remarkable young person."

Winifred leaned forward, as eager as Gladys had been on her arrival to see the streets and objects they were passing; and though she did not know that Arthur had gone without his dinner in order to give her the drive in a cab, thus making her arrival seem of special importance, yet her satis-

faction certainly repaid him, and her face beamed, and her questions were gayly put, until at last he said,

"Here we are. My apartments, my dear, are not the most sumptuous that can be imagined. Do you remember Dick Swiveller and the Marchioness? We must imagine there are marble floors and fluted pillars."

"Oh, but I like this best," said Winifred, eagerly, as the cab stopped before a house in a square which a century ago had been one of the centres of fashion in London. The house was one of a row of yellow brick dwellings, with here and there the diversity of a bow-window, but presenting, for the most part, unbroken lines of tall, narrow casements, an iron-work balcony on the first floor, and old-fashioned "extinguishers" on either side of the door-way, giving a certain air of melancholy distinction to the house where Arthur lived, while in the centre of the square a dead-and-gone Duke of St. Manr was immortalized in gray stone on a pedestal which afforded endless amusement to the children of the neighborhood. Winifred's eyes, eager as she was to note whatever was new or strange or especially characteristic, were quick to take in the surroundings; and while Arthur was settling with the cabman she had time to observe with satisfaction that the neighborhood was a very old one, full of the dignity of bricks and mortar, of narrow, quaint old side streets, which gave to this antiquated part of London such fruitful charm. The day, although not especially cold, was dull; but who can expect brilliant sunshine in London in January? A faint, impalpable sort of haze that

might easily turn into fog hung over everything, and already street lamps were being lighted, but Winnie caught hints of certain, to her, indisputable attractions in the neighborhood, and she was already eager to roam about with a companion and guide like Arthur who shared all her tastes, and was sure to have picked up the lore of the vicinity they were in.

The door of No. 58 was opened by a slip of a girl with a cap set awry on her head, and who seemed delighted at the opportunity of gazing into the street, since she stared open-mouthed at some distant object, while Arthur said,

"Is Mrs. Brown in, Susan?"

But he only received an answer when he had repeated the question once or twice.

"Oh yes, sir," the girl said, bringing her gaze back to Winnie's figure, with sudden animation and interest. "Mistress she's in the back parlor."

And presently Winifred was ushered into a sitting-room at the lower end of the hall, where a good-natured landlady, with flying cap ribbons and a large white apron, was seated at a little table, account-books and rather greasy-looking bills in a heap before her.

"Your room's all ready, Miss," she said, in a kind voice, after the usual introductions were gone through with. "I suppose it's all right, Mr. Beresford, to have Miss put into the small bedroom near to yours?"

"Quite right, thank you, Mrs. Brown," said Arthur. "And if you can send up a jug of hot water, we'll make the tea, you know, for ourselves."

Mrs. Brown nodded and smiled. Her lodgers had to accept the fact of very meagre attendance; but then, on the other hand, her terms for rooms were, as she put it, "ridiculously low;" and Arthur Beresford, who paid five shillings a week for his room on the top floor, did not expect any special service at all, and Winifred looked forward to "doing" for him as one of the pleasures of her visit. But as she followed her brother up three flights of stairs to a large room very near the roof, but with decided advantages for his work, she had not the least idea how much would transpire before she left Mickleham Square, nor how strangely she would be detained there.

CHAPTER XXVII.

ARTHUR'S WORKSHOP.

ARTHUR would have been lacking in the faculty which Janey had proudly called his genius if he had not contrived to give his room certain artistic touches—something which gave it, bare as it was, the look of an artist's workshop; and though he had no idea how really valuable were certain bits of drapery which his mother had given him from an old chest of things that had belonged to her grandmother, yet he keenly appreciated the effect of the rich greens and reds which they produced when fastened up across the wall of one end. The piece of plush from the same hoard which covered the back of the sofa bedstead had faded to a pale saffron hue which would have delighted the eyes and heart of many an Academician, and indeed went far, though he would have been ashamed perhaps to confess it, towards reconciling the enthusiastic young artist with the poverty so apparent in his abode. A few really good etchings in black frames hung upon the wall. Instead of the soiled white curtains which Arthur had found in the window on his arrival were some pieces of blue and white chintz, which he looked to Winifred to make into regular

hangings, while he likewise hoped that during her visit she would give to the room something of the home-like air which he had failed to produce. On this account he had not yet unpacked the two pieces of furniture which his mother had sent up from their own meagrely furnished home—the one a square little table of the “ladder-legged” pattern of her own grandfather’s day, the other an easy-chair of comfortable dimensions, although rather depressed circumstances. There should be, the boy had said, a certain amusement for Winifred and himself in the setting forth of these treasures, and the expenditure of the few shillings he had contrived to save for the further decoration of his room.

Poor Arthur, in his roamings among the bric-à-brac shops of London, felt mad at times with a longing to possess the articles which appealed to his eye, to his senses, to his imagination, as so many delightful accessories to the art that was really burning within him. He loved nature, but his bent was for figures—for interiors—and it was his delicate taste more than the actual dexterity of his work which had obtained him those fortunate commissions in “black-and-white” work for one of Hopewell’s magazines.

Only those who have gone through the struggles of an artistic career can understand and sympathize with privations which are not only those of bread and butter, shoe leather, and omnibus fares. All of these Arthur Beresford had endured with the buoyancy of youth and a determination to fight his way manfully, and he had encountered them more than once willingly for the sake of possessing certain

objects which he now exulted in. Even to Winifred, however, he did not for many years tell the story of a little mandolin which hung upon a sunny portion of the wall near his easel. He had come upon it in one of those long walks of his, and gravely calculated how many meals he would have to go without in order to become its proud possessor. Seated on a bench in the dusty shop where it hung, he had gazed upon it, finally concluding that he could do without eleven meals during the month, but he certainly could not do without the mandolin. And so the system of an occasional fast was begun, the martyr refreshing himself with a daily inspection of his coveted treasure, which he felt to be his own from the moment when he laid the first half-crown towards its purchase in the dealer's hand; and I doubt if there existed a happier lad in all London than young Beresford on the evening when, the last penny paid, he bore the mandolin home in triumph, and hung it by its faded silken ribbon on that bit of the wall where the patch of sunlight that lingered last always could rest upon it.

Somewhere he had picked up a pair of quaint little black satin slippers with curious heels and toes, and the young artist, closing his eyes, could build up from these, which had been worn by some girl in shadow-land, a charming figure, a girl with smiling eyes and parted lips, who should hold the mandolin, and be painted with a slim hand holding the quill with which he knew these instruments were wakened into sound. It was hard work for him to do tail-pieces and fragments of blocks for Mr. Hopewell while his

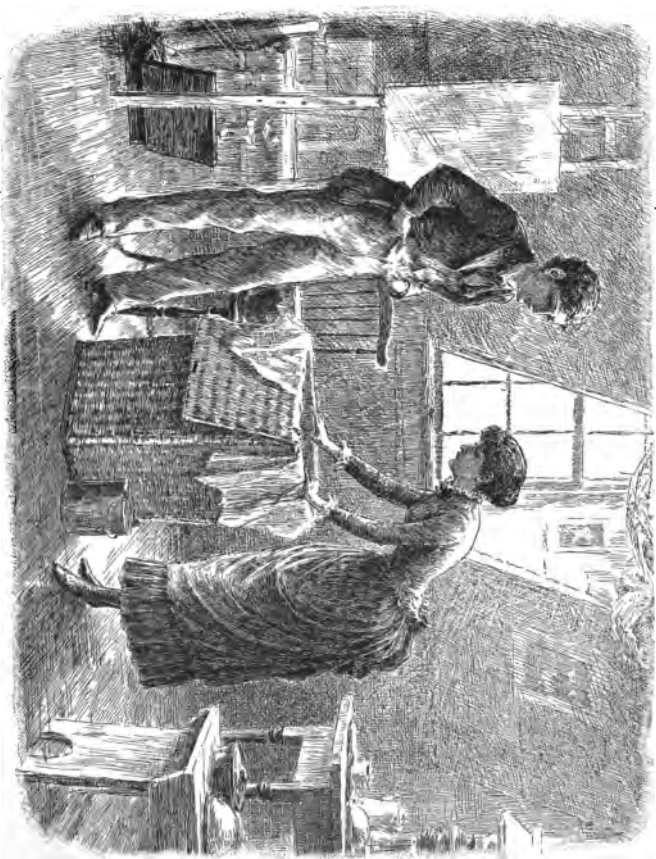
mind and heart and fancy ran riot with innumerable subjects like this, and his mandolin, catching those faint tones of sunset color, seemed to vibrate with suggestiveness. But it would all come in time, and I am sure that if the artistic temperament which Arthur Beresford evidently possessed brought him hours of disquietude, it certainly had its compensation in periods of exultation and peculiar enjoyments such as no wealth could have purchased; and I for one am not inclined to quarrel with the fact that Fortune lent him so little of her favor this first year of struggle.

Winifred was delighted with the large shabby room, touched here and there into life and color, and her satisfaction was complete when Arthur produced from a cupboard his cooking apparatus, and asked her to do the honors of the occasion.

It was dark enough to light the lamp, but the brother and sister both preferred the twilight. Arthur stirred the fire into a more genial blaze, while Winifred laid the cloth for tea, brought out the two cups and saucers, plates, etc., which he had been provided with, and then, while the little tea-kettle was boiling, they proceeded to an inspection of the hamper. Fresh eggs and butter, with some home-made bread, Arthur declared a royal repast.

"Why, for a long time," he said, regarding Winifred's home-like preparations with great satisfaction, "I used to make my tea in my shaving-mug."

"Ugh! Arthur," exclaimed Winifred, with a grimace of disgust, "that's just like a boy. How could you drink it?"



INSPECTING THE HAMPER.

"Well, it wasn't so bad," he rejoined. "There was a nice little flavor of soap about it sometimes; but you can get used to almost anything."

"Well, it's time some of us came, I should say, to look after you," said Winifred, peering into the little saucepan, to make sure the water was boiling before she dropped the eggs into it.

"That's what I was thinking myself," said Arthur. "Here, you can have the chair; I will sit on the bench;" and he proceeded to dust these articles, while Winifred placed the eggs upon the table, looking about her with an air of profound enjoyment of the fun which her arrangements for their tea involved.

They sat down, and certainly both enjoyed and did justice to the little meal; and while it was in progress talk about home went on, drifting naturally to the question of what Winifred had to do for Mrs. Cleves.

"We'll have a fine time at Liberty's," the boy said, delightedly; "they have wonderful stuffs there. By George, doesn't it make a fellow just groan to see them!"

He gazed a moment reflectively at his beloved mandolin, bringing his eyes back suddenly to Winifred's womanly little figure seated opposite him in the fast waning light. Like most brothers, he had grown up too familiar with the outlines of his sisters' faces to think much about them one way or the other. Winifred and Janey were strong, vigorous girls, he knew, with a fine capacity for walking or running, or even playing at ball, but whether they were going

to be plain or pretty he had never asked himself. But now the new life in London, the perpetual effort in an artistic direction, the association with what was good in form and color, had quickened the lad's perceptions, and it was with a thrill of pride and delight that he recognized the qualities in the young girl before him. The soft young face, the dark eyes, the waves of chestnut hair with the little gleam of gold about it, and then the easy, unconscious grace of her attitude—what a charming model she would make for his long-dreamed-of picture! Dare he attempt it? Arthur had been long enough in London to appreciate his own shortcomings, yet the impulse to do something with his brush on one of those delightfully tempting white canvases, two of which he had invested in, could not be resisted, and he startled Winifred by saying, suddenly,

“Oh, Winnie, I tell you what I'll do while you are here: I'll try and paint a picture. You shall sit for it. I know a fellow that has just the right costume for it. I believe I'll go down to his place to-night.”

It was a fascinating suggestion, and yet Winifred looked just a little bit alarmed over the idea of sitting for a picture; moreover, she had so much more to tell Arthur about Barnford matters. It was a trifle aggravating to find that it was hard work, now that this idea had seized him, to chain his attention. She wanted to tell him about Gladys Ferrol, Janey's enthusiasm over her, the reports that Miss Dymond treated her with great severity, and what was of most importance, finally arrested Arthur's wandering attention.

"Miss Dymond and Gladys were in Exeter last month," she said; "and what do you suppose, Mrs. John's daughter was down there at the same time, and saw her several times. Mrs. Cleves says that something must have occurred that pleased her very much, for Sarah was in the greatest spirits when she saw her, and talked of Gladys as though she had a secret understanding with her.

Arthur, who had been examining the mandolin in the lamplight, turned suddenly.

"Mrs. John's daughter!" he exclaimed. "I thought they were over in Boulogne."

"They have been in England for six months," said Winifred. She was intensely interested in her brother's work, but glad to have secured his attention on a topic which had fascinations almost as great for her, especially since a new mystery had been added to it.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

IN EXETER CATHEDRAL.

I HOPE none of my readers has forgotten Mrs. John and her mysterious plans, in the working out of which blooming Miss Sarah was to be the willing agent. While Gladys was enduring a life of as much seclusion and severity as Miss Dymond dared to enforce, Sarah had compassed her principal design, and one bright morning in December she arrived in Exeter on a visit to her mother's aunt, Miss Ferniss—a lady whose business was dress-making, or, as Sarah called it, “the dress-makery.”

Sarah was a great favorite with the Fernisses. Her connection with a fine county family, her residence in France, and last, but by no means least, her striking good looks, made her a popular visitor, and Miss Ferniss and her sister Maria had their best china out for dinner in the little parlor just above the shop, and their most agreeable company manners in waiting for their young niece.

Sarah came in upon them radiant, talkative, and full of importance, which set the little household in a buzz of animation. The Misses Ferniss lived on the High Street in *Exeter*, in one of the queerest of the old houses that make

that city so delightfully picturesque. Sarah did not know anything of the history of the town, or it might have interested her to learn that Margaret of Anjou had been lodged in one of these old dwellings; that the wars of York and Lancaster had set the city in a ferment, the red rose and the white being striven over in the very street whose pavements she watched so enjoyably during that afternoon. I am afraid, however, that Sarah's opinion of the fine old town was that it was very dull, except when her cousin Peter's young people were at home. Tradition and antiquity had no charm for her. She had a general idea that such things were in keeping with France and other parts of the Continent, but at home and in her own surroundings she liked everything to be new and bright and sparkling; and she was glad that the grand old cathedral of Exeter was restored, not because the pale-hued splendors which such work revealed were part of its original beauty, the triumph of those patient, unknown toilers of the Middle Ages, but because she believed in making things look clean and bright and gay as possible. Perhaps, after all, little Sarah, with her fearless independence, her joyous belief in herself, and her enjoyment of the bright side of things generally, found as much happiness in her life as Janey, or Winifred, or Arthur Beresford could have taken to themselves in their world of books and music, poetry and art.

Sarah thought a great many of the prevailing fashions were the greatest nonsense. If she wore olive green or dull blue, it was only in deference to that awful oracle who pre-

sided over Belgravia and Brompton; but in her heart of hearts she liked a bit of gay color that matched the rosy tints in her cheeks and brought out the dark gleams in her eyes, just as she liked a good farce at the theatre, and what she called a "swell" dinner at Simpson's in the Strand. Sarah thought she had reached the acme of delight, had tasted the finest pleasures of life in Paris, when with an English party they had picnicked in fine style at St. Germain's, and dined the same evening in one of the restaurants in the Palais Royal. On the whole, Sarah was a healthy, light-hearted girl, but she was conscious of a terrible want in her own life and in that of her whole family; and in spite of the charms and advantages of their Continental wanderings, it was this which made her feel with her mother that to live in England was the only safe thing for them to do. The want was money, and one of its terrifying results was the fact that her father believed the only gentlemanly way to acquire it was at the gaming-table.

Sarah, recovering from the first crushing sense of disappointment after Colonel Dymond's death, had resolved that the American heiress, Gladys Ferrol, must be made to set things right, to build up the fortunes of the family, to secure them against the disgrace of what she and her mother called the captain's "goings on." Luckily for the success of her schemes, this cheerful young conspirator had not the slightest shade of that delicacy which hinders progress in such matters, and which would have made it impossible for Winifred or Jane Beresford to have so much as told their rival of

their miseries. Sarah's plan of action was the simplest, most direct, and conclusive. Gladys Ferrol should not be "let off easy." This was her first idea. She should be *made to know*, and then, if necessary, should be told what was "the handsome thing to do." But Sarah had no intention of being particularly sentimental over anything.

"If I have to tell her about pa," she had said to her mother on the evening before she started forth on this important mission, "I ain't agoing to make no bones about it. Of course she'll know for herself he's a born gentleman, and what family he comes from, but I ain't agoing to pretend that's done us any particular good. It's only giving us the right to say our say now. Of course I needn't talk against him, but he needn't think I'm going to make out he's an injured angel of light. He's brought it all on himself and us too, and if I can help the family along now, why, he has got to behave himself for a little while anyway."

In spite of her intention to make things plain and clear to Gladys, Sarah was alive to the fact that she ought to make her first appearance in as becoming a costume as possible, for which end she had procured a combination dress whereof the stripes were a warm crimson on a dark-green ground, the ribbons bright in hue, and the hat, which her mother said went beautiful with the dress, had a scarlet wing and a tuft of feathers of the same shade reposing on a coil of brown velvet.

Sarah announced at dinner that she had heard Gladys was with Miss Dymond in Exeter.

"Up to see Doctor Huntley," said Miss Ferniss. "You know she spends most every December here under his care, and I hear she is very poorly, and in her bed a good deal of the time."

"So much the better for me," said Sarah. "Now Aunt Rosamond mustn't ask too many questions while I'm here. I've some important business to transact, and if you don't mind I'll take a run out by myself this afternoon."

"If she ain't her ma all over again!" said Miss Maria, watching the bright-hued young figure cross the street and vanish down a side lane or alley-way bordered with shops, which led into the neighborhood of the cathedral. Sarah went along holding her head high, shaking out her draperies now and then as a bird does its plumage, and in the wintry street making an effect of color not altogether unlike a comfortable robin-redbreast. She had procured easily enough the address of Miss Dymond's lodgings, and felt not the slightest hesitancy in presenting herself there as a visitor for Gladys Ferrol. Her state of mind was so sanguine and high-strung that even the dignified quiet of the grand old cathedral close did not subdue her. She felt none of its suggestive and abiding charm. The power of the grand monastic proportions of the sacred edifice, the beauty of the grammar-school, the verdure of the old gardens, all were lost upon her as she made her way across the quiet space before the cathedral portal, but a certain feeling of curiosity impelled her to stop a moment and look about the interior.

Afternoon service was over; the choristers and the sur-

pliced clergyman had trooped away, the congregation had dispersed, and as Sarah, with doubting steps, stood a moment in the main aisle looking about her, she was conscious that two or three visitors lingered in the building. One of these attracted her attention, first, no doubt, because it was a girl near her own age, and very well dressed; and as her mind was full of the colonel's heiress, it was not surprising that a thought flitted through her active mind which resolved itself into a wonder whether this handsome, refined-looking young girl, whose gray eyes and gentle, although half-proud, half-wistful smile was specially attractive, might not be the very person she was in search of. If so, what a fortunate chance! for the young girl was alone; and as things looked, Sarah felt that she might have the whole afternoon before her.

Gladys—for it was indeed she—was separated from her unknown visitor by a few rows of benches and the width of a side aisle. She was all unconscious of the eager scrutiny bent upon her from Sarah's bright black eyes. During the dreary days she had spent in Exeter her one relaxation had been this hour in the grand old cathedral, when, the service over, she could loiter about the aisles while the wintry sunset gathered, lighting up those wonderful pale-hued tones of arch and ceiling, giving to the place a charm which penetrated all the young girl's imagination, making her forget for the time being her homesickness, her weariness, her sense of complete disenchantment with the new life and the great fortune, which had only seemed to divide her from useful

activity and the people and amusements that she loved. No one had really meant to be unkind or do the wrong thing by the colonel's little heiress, but, as I have said before, all her relations were oppressed by a sense that they must wait for Captain Paget's return before her attitude and theirs could be defined and understood; meanwhile the girl's individuality was forgotten.

The fact that a young nature, full of eager enthusiasm, of impulses, and affections, was being stifled in the old Manor-house, that Gladys's first impressions of a country and a people she would really learn to love were all chilled from want of something more directly personal and sympathetic, had not really occurred to any one, and so it had come about that, compelled to submit to Miss Dymond's rule, the girl had sunk into a state as near to apathetic dejection as was possible in one so vigorous and wholesome by nature. The silent figures in the old cathedral—the effigies of dead-and-gone people—the faces and the folded hands carved in stone, appealed to her day after day as she sauntered among them with something curiously direct and interesting; and long afterwards Gladys Ferrol used to say that her first realization of the fact that life and fortune, wealth and its countless distinctions, were only like a drop in the great ocean of eternity, came to her during these lonely afternoons and in a way she never could explain even to herself. Her mind and nature that winter received hints of a growth possible in higher directions than she had dreamed of before. So you see, hard as it all was, it had its influence for good

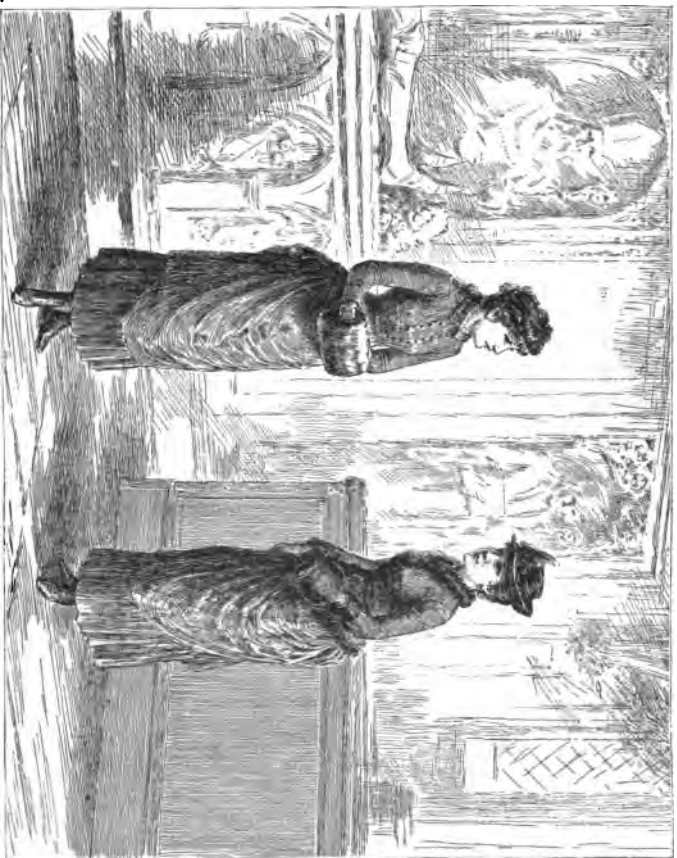
since it turned the purpose of the girl's thought from her own sudden and dazzling elevation to some reflection upon the vanity and insufficiency of wealth or power alone.

Had Sarah ever seen Gladys Ferrol before, she would have been aware that a change had come into the young girl's face and manner. The old impetuosity had been so long restrained that even in her movements the little merry gesture of head and hand, the quickness of step, were wanting, and the spontaneous gayety of her smile had vanished. It was only under a cloud just for the time being, while my little heroine's horizon seemed so misty and shadowed. But Gladys did not realize this herself. She looked forward to no change in anything during the period of what she now drearily at all times called her exile; and as she turned from her contemplation of Dame Margery Beaufort and her husband, who had died and been buried here three hundred years ago, she felt something like a pang of envy for the brilliant-looking young girl who was gazing at her from across the open pews.

Sarah needed none of the quivering gleams of sunset color to bring out or set off her radiant figure. She was standing in a spot of light, so that every point was effective, and to Gladys just then she seemed the embodiment of the sort of element she had lost out of her own life. Involuntarily she smiled, and as Sarah said afterwards, something—what, no one could tell—made her feel certain that this pale, pretty young girl must be Gladys Ferrol. It might have been the indescribable touch of Americanism, or perhaps it was all just chance. However, as we know, Sarah's fancy

proved to be correct, and when she went forward and said in her very best manner, "Is this Miss Gladys Ferrol?" she was not surprised to have Gladys answer with a smile and a simply uttered "Yes."

"Well, Heaven be praised!" ejaculated Sarah, holding out her hand. "I'd a deal rather have met you here, though I wouldn't have been one bit afraid to go right up to her face, if necessary, and ask for you. I'm sure there ain't any one, even those stuck-up Bruces or those Beresford cousins of ours, that haven't spirit enough to know what is their own, as has a better right. I do 'ope we'll be good friends."



“IS THIS MISS GLADYS FERROL?”

CHAPTER XXIX.

SARAH "SPEAKS HER MIND FREELY."

"**I** AM very glad you told me about it. It makes things seem clearer."

Gladys Ferrol was the speaker. She was sitting in Miss Ferniss's little parlor with Sarah, who, having laid aside her bonnet and gloves, and the fur-trimmed jacket which had cost her so much anxious labor, had plunged into an account of her family connection with Gladys, the injustice and cruelty of Colonel Dymond's will, and all the misery a different settlement of his money might have saved.

"And as I said to ma," cried Sarah, flushed by pride in her success and the real excitement of the occasion, "what's the good of having money if you can't be open-handed with it; and when you come to think of it, we were brought up to look for it"—Sarah did not say by whom—"so you see it comes all the harder. Why, there's the twins, Dymond and Paget! Do you suppose ma'd 'ave been such a goose as to give them those names if she hadn't thought it was as good as a thousand pounds apiece to them? Why, my cousin Peter's father 'ere would have brought them up if they'd been named for him and his father. But no; as ma said, there

was family as well as money the other side of the question."

Gladys was too much absorbed in the main part of Sarah's recital to pay much attention to the shrewd worldly wisdom which the girl had unconsciously betrayed.

"And you say the Beresfords at Little Barnford are your cousins?" she said, anxiously.

Sarah gave a rather shrill laugh.

"I should think so," she answered; and added, with a characteristic toss of her head, "Oh, you needn't be afraid I ain't telling you the truth! It's all easy enough proven, and for one thing I ain't agoing to pretend that father's been a saint or anything like it. But what I say is this: if he's cost ma and the whole of us so many heartaches, why, ain't his own family the ones as ought to make it up to us? And as I says to ma, if she's the right kind of girl she can bear a little plain talking to. I know just how it is; you haven't got much in your own 'ands *now*."

Gladys for just a moment felt as though the brilliant black eyes of Miss Sarah demanded that she should take out her little purse and count over her loose change.

Sarah went on, fluently:

"I shouldn't wonder if I know more about the whole thing than you do yourself. There's that Captain Paget—"

"Oh!" cried Gladys, "what is he like?"

"Paget?" answered Sarah, with a decided elevation of her pert little nose. "Why, he's one of your stuck-up swells, he is. He's a good-looking old thing too; but as Algy says—

that's my brother—you can see all you want of his sort in the Park any day. One of those fellows without anything to do but 'ang around with a big rose-bud in their button-holes."

"Why, I thought he was a soldier," said Gladys, just a little inclined to be indignant on her guardian's account, and yet unspeakably amused by Miss Sarah's descriptive powers.

"Oh, *he!*" said Sarah, her nose again elevated, and a power of scorn in her voice. "Well, I guess the savages out there needn't be very much afraid of him and his little gun. They needn't hurry away and leave everything behind them just because they catch a sight of his lordship's mustaches in the distance."

Gladys could not help laughing, and yet it was evident enough to her that Sarah's animosity was the result of class feeling.

"He sort of wormed himself around Colonel Dymond," she went on; "and between him and the old cat that has charge of you they contrived to make things pretty bad for the Beresfords. But I tell you what you can do," she continued, lowering her tone a very little, "you could make a promise, do you see, to us—to me, for instance—of what you will do when you get your money into your hands; and then if you're the sort of girl that doesn't go back of your word, it will be 'most as good as if we had it now, and perhaps you'd feel disposed to help us on a little bit from time to time. You see," added Sarah, with a superior manner,

"I can't feel just as if I was asking a downright favor, for if you knew all we had to put up with from the old colonel, and how we were led on to expect something when he died! And then to think that there was nothing at all!"

Indelicate as was Sarah's way of stating the case, Gladys felt the rude justice of what the girl put forth as a genuine claim, and, moreover, her heart was stirred by a desire to befriend all of those whom this tiresome fortune in coming to her had left disappointed and miserable. The Beresfords of Little Barnford of course came first in her estimation, but the household described to her in bold colors by this girl—the crippled sister so fond of reading, and yet deprived of the ordinary advantages of learning, the little twins who in spite of their aristocratic names had known few of the delights of childhood, the elder brother compelled to take a drudge's place, and the father whose habits made them all so unhappy—this picture moved Gladys to a feeling that the sooner she pledged herself to relieve it all the better, and of course she would never break her word. As for that suggestion of occasional assistance, even this might be managed, for Gladys had a liberal allowance of pocket-money, out of which she had contrived through Mrs. Cleve to purchase a great deal of Winnie's fancy-work during the autumn.

Sarah watched her visitor's face in the half-lights of the winter afternoon with a shrewd but anxious scrutiny. She was worldly-wise enough to know that success depended entirely upon Gladys Ferrol's sentiments, and the same pre-

cocious instincts developed by the existence her father's vagabond life had forced upon his children made her believe wholly in the sincerity and fine sense of honor of this American rival. She was not at all afraid that Captain Paget would break Gladys down in any resolution which she had made in the belief that it was right, but the young girl's hesitation and silence puzzled her just a little. How surprised would she have been could she have read Gladys Ferrol's mind at that moment, and seen that the only question disturbing it was the amount of money she ought to promise this anxious applicant!

"I think," said Gladys, finally, in a voice which sounded somewhat timid after Sarah's confident tones—"I think you are right. You certainly have been unfairly treated. I will go home now, because it is late, and because I want to think a little bit about it."

"Stop a moment!" cried Sarah, suddenly, as Gladys was moving away. "Isn't that Miss Jarvis with you?"

Gladys nodded.

"Well, then," said Sarah, "if you're in doubt about anything, you can ask her, and perhaps you wouldn't mind sending a bit of a note down here to me this evening. Miss Jarvis will be glad enough to bring it."

Just what were Gladys Ferrol's reflections during the walk home, and a conversation which she held with Jarvis, who had always treated her with a sympathetic kindness as well as deference, we need not inquire. Sarah, fluttered and excited by her interview, spent the rest of the afternoon in

a state of exhilaration which made her, so her aunts considered, excellent company. They were all sitting together around the table in the parlor about eight o'clock, when a knock at the door preceded the entrance of Mary Jarvis, who had come to Exeter as Gladys Ferrol's maid. The note which the little heiress had written was in her hand—a gleaming white envelope bordered with black, and containing, as Sarah felt, her verdict. She sprang forward, holding out her hand for the letter, and then, leaving her aunts to entertain their visitor, darted away to the privacy of her own room, where with trembling fingers she lighted a candle and tore the letter open.

Gladys had but one idea in her mind when she wrote the letter destined to be of such importance to many people. This was to make reparation for the wrong-doing of one who had dealt all too generously by herself. Certainly she had not the least idea of the condition of excitement her decision would throw Sarah into. That young person read and reread the words which, few as they were, fairly stunned her by their importance.

“I have been thinking it all over,” wrote Gladys, “and I hope what I am doing will make you all comfortable and happy. I promise to give your family, as soon as I have possession of my money, ten thousand pounds. Of course nothing will make me break my word.

“Your cousin,

“GLADYS FERROL.”



“TEN THOUSAND POUNDS!” SHE MURMURED.

Sarah stood motionless by the chest of drawers, where she had lighted the candle, unable to take in the full importance of the words she saw before her, stupefied by this sudden and unexpectedly generous response to her appeal. But her first definite and coherent thought was a tribute to the honesty she had recognized in Gladys Ferrol's face.

"*Ten thousand pounds!*" she murmured, half aloud; "and I know one thing—that girl will never break her word."

CHAPTER XXX.

A "GENUINE WATTEAU."

WINIFRED was up early, for how could she sleep with the prospect of such an interesting and exciting day before her? Mrs. Brown, in her capacity of chaperon for the little country girl, came up-stairs about ten o'clock to know if Winifred wanted her or her daughter to go out with her; but Arthur and she had planned to go together, and thanking the landlady for her kindness, the young people started forth on their expedition to the shops, where Winnie was to make her first purchases for Mrs. Cleves, with Arthur to help her to a judicious selection. It is needless to say much of the fascination of such places as Liberty's and Burnett's, to whose emporiums the young artist conducted his sister, glad of an excuse for turning over the beautiful Eastern fabrics, the soft silks of every possible artistic hue, of inspecting the Japanese wares, the bric-à-brac, and papering, wall-hangings and decorations of so many kinds that Winifred, in spite of her keen enjoyment of it all, was fairly bewildered, and but for Arthur's assistance might have made the most unsuitable sort of purchases for her employer.

"Now, then," said Arthur, as they emerged into Regent Street, after the selection was at last made, and the things for Mrs. Cleves ordered sent by express, "what shall we do next? You must see some pictures, of course. There's a rare collection of water-colors open. Shall we go there first, or to the South Kensington Museum?"

Winnie was only too well pleased to leave everything in Arthur's hands, and so the Bond Street gallery was visited first, Arthur telling her what to look at and to admire, uttering criticisms upon this, that, and the other which seemed to her positively oracular. Then came an inspection of the galleries of the Museum, where Winnie not only enjoyed the pictures, but the collection of books and manuscripts, some of which made her almost feel as though she must be clasp- ing hands with her beloved authors. The day included a variety of delights, and Winnie was young enough to thor- oughly enjoy the lunch, or rather dinner, which Arthur in- sisted upon their having in the restaurant, where it was fas- cinating to see the cook in his white apron and cap busy over the fire, and very agreeable to partake of a delicious chop sent piping hot from the grill, with a cup of coffee, and a plate of plum-pudding such as she had only read about in Christmas stories.

What mattered it to the two young people that as they emerged into the street again a thick fog was beginning to obscure everything? It was too bad, perhaps, not to see the Park and the Albert Memorial, but was there not before them the prospect of a concert for which Arthur on this re-

markable occasion had been rash enough to buy seats in the balcony? No girl going out to her first ball in all the pomp and bravery of splendid circumstances ever felt happier than did little Winifred as she stood at Arthur's side waiting for an omnibus, and thinking of the enjoyment in prospect when they would hear Santley and Madame Patti sing, and Charles Halle play the "Moonlight Sonata." A great many people noticed the young pair that day, Arthur's tall figure and fine, speaking face sufficiently like Winifred's to proclaim them brother and sister, and yet what an almost fatherly air of protection and satisfaction dignified the boy's manner! He was proud of his sister's pretty looks, and cared not a rush for the fact that her dress was not in fashion and decidedly shabby. He wished, as they stood on the corner, that some of the fellows he knew would come along and see her, and he said, looking down upon the bright, happy young face lifted so cheerily to his own,

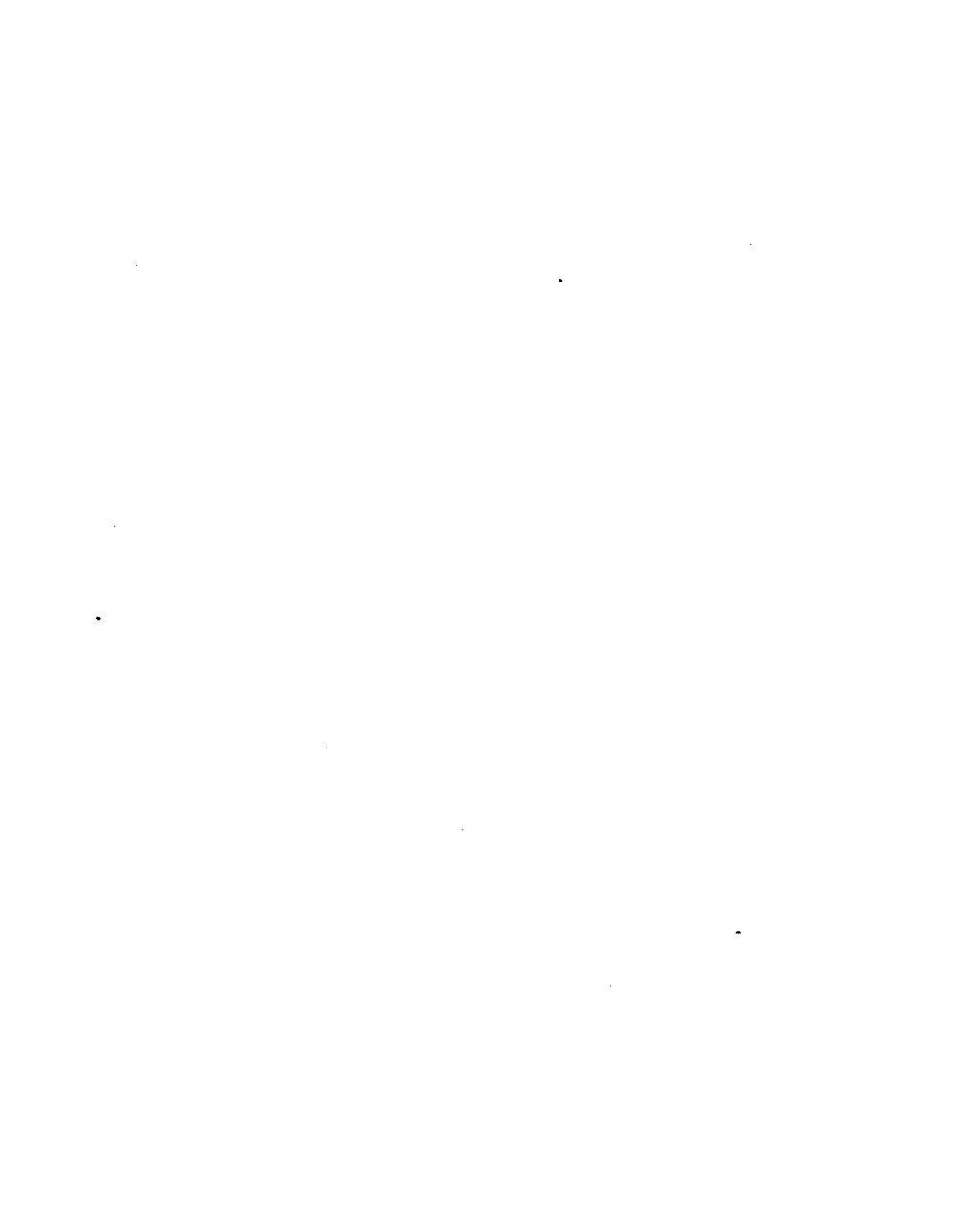
"I think, Win, we might have a flower or two for you to-night. Let's go into this florist's and see what he has."

Winifred only made a very faint remonstrance, and suffered herself to be led into the florist's, where Arthur selected a bunch of deep-hued carnations and some rich green leaves, which Winifred declared would look beautifully with her gray dress that evening.

When they reached home Arthur's mind was so full of his picture that he insisted upon Winnie's beginning work as a model for it, and the impulse to join him in this had been *strengthened by all that she had seen during the morning.*



THE GIRL WITH THE MANDOLIN.



Arthur had borrowed from his friend the gown of which he spoke—a curiously made garment of faded blue brocade—and when Winnie gave a little cry of dismay over its general air of-forlornness, Arthur said, peremptorily,

"My dear, you don't know what you're talking about. This is a genuine Watteau, and I assure you such a thing is not to be had every other day."

"Why, it looks like an old rag," said Winnie, laughing.

"But oh how precious!" cried Arthur, striking an attitude. "It's not just what I wanted for my girl with the mandolin," he continued, "but we'll make it do."

Winifred went away to her own room, and arrayed herself in the "genuine Watteau," feeling it must be something very wonderful, whose value she did not understand; but when she had donned the gown, and found out how beautifully it fitted, how gracefully it hung, and above all things how entirely comfortable it was, she began to appreciate Arthur's sentiments in regard to it, and looking at herself in the glass, she felt quite fascinated by the reflection cast back. Arthur had been right in saying to himself that Winifred would make a capital study for his girl with the mandolin; the arch piquancy of her type, the impression of soft roundness and yet of girlish slimness which she gave, suited the costume to perfection, and the pale blue, with a faint tracery of silver showing in the pattern, brought out all the delicate peachy tints of her complexion and the dark brilliancy and yet softness of her eyes.

When she returned to Arthur's room he had a space

cleared, his draperies effectively tacked against that side of the wall, and a bench placed near the window where Winifred took her place.

"I wonder if the real girl who played this mandolin felt so comfortable?" said Winifred, as Arthur slipped the ribbon about her neck.

"I tell you what I think about her," he answered. "She never wore a Watteau dress at all, because she was some years in advance of them, and Rainham hadn't exactly the right sort of costume; but if I ever paint the picture, I don't suppose one person out of a hundred would know the difference."

It was too late to do more than get a general impression of the pose, to make a few rough outlines in charcoal on the stretcher before him, but it served as a note for the work, and relieved Arthur's feelings greatly, and it was amusing to both of them. Winnie declared that she hated to take the dress off, but there was the satisfaction a little later of dressing for the concert, and again Arthur was pleased to express decided approval of his sister. By this time Winifred had learned that his criticism was, as he told her, too entirely from an artistic point of view to be taken as mere compliment; that his deep-hued carnations and the rich green leaves "came well" in the belt of her little gray gown, she began to understand as less a tribute to herself than a mere expression of his pleasure in a harmonious combination. But his gay good spirits, his evident satisfaction in her company, were very comforting and agreeable, and about a quarter

past seven o'clock the brother and sister, who could afford to disregard such depressing elements as a fog and a few muddy crossings which they encountered on their walk, found themselves one of a bustling, animated crowd. To walk through the corridor, where prints of the popular professionals of the day were hanging; then to follow Arthur up the staircase and into the balcony of a large well-lighted hall, where already a fine-dressed audience were assembled—all of this produced a sort of intoxication of pleasure in Winifred's heart. Fond as she was of music, yet she was girl enough to be absorbed by other delights of the concert-room just now. It was her first experience of the kind, and as she took her place beside Arthur, felt on such delightfully good terms with everybody and everything that she fairly beamed as she turned to the person next to her with a word of apology for the little stumble she had made in coming in.

It was a girl a little older than herself, whose face betrayed that the occasion was a novel one for her also. Winifred, after her apology was made, glanced again furtively at her neighbor. She was beautifully dressed, although the costume was rather too elaborate for her years; but the rich blue silk, the frills of Honiton lace in neck and sleeves, the small solitaire diamond ear-rings, and the rings and bracelets with which the young girl was adorned, all dazzled little Winifred's vision, while the girl's face, perfectly regular in outline, fair in coloring, and framed by heavy waves of blond hair, had just a touch of something not exactly English, and yet not French, about it, and which for a

moment puzzled Winnie, until Arthur, whose eyes had also taken in the group—mother and daughter and elderly gentleman escort—said, in a low tone,

“I think they are Americans;” and Winifred, with a quick thought of Gladys Ferrol, looked in their direction once more. The mother was a middle-aged edition of the daughter, and could she have known it, Winnie would have been surprised to know that she and Arthur were subjects of their criticism as well.

“What a handsome boy!” was Mrs. Hildreth’s comment as, in response to a whisper from Mollie, she had glanced at Arthur’s fine profile, with the look of Guy Montescue clearly apparent in the brow, with the close-cropped dark hair waving a little back from it, the mouth with its fine air of composure, the eyes with their indications of genius and yet boyish light-heartedness—all suggesting something which made Gladys Ferrol’s idea that he must be a hero not altogether inappropriate. But the concert was beginning—at least there was a rustle and final settling down of the gayly talkative audience in their places. Mrs. Hildreth and Mollie, Winifred Beresford and her brother, bent their eyes upon their programmes.

“I am so glad Santley will sing ‘When the Heart is Young,’” said Arthur.

CHAPTER XXXI.

HAPPY DAYS.

AN intermission took place midway in this delightful concert. Winifred, who had been fairly spellbound by the music, sank back in her seat feeling as though some peculiar strain had been removed; but, as before the concert opened, there was the entertainment of watching the audience—the ladies for the most part in evening dress, or at least without bonnets, and giving by certain touches in their costume an effect of festive attire. People moved about, talking to their friends, and the American party on Winnie's left leaned forward, evidently interested in the social aspect of the scene. Presently something the girl at her side said startled Winifred, so that she almost answered by an exclamation of surprise.

"I wish Gladys Ferrol were with us," the girl was saying; "and just suppose that, after all, we could not find her! I think it is so strange that Mr. Ferrol did not send us the address; and suppose that we have to leave London next week!"

"But if we go down to that place—Barnford, isn't that the name?—we shall be sure to find her," said the lady.

Winifred's excitement was rising. Arthur had moved away for a few moments to speak to a gentleman at the curve of the balcony, and Winifred, in the interesting dilemma which the stranger's words produced, found herself obliged to act on her own judgment. There was only a moment's hesitation before she said shyly, and in a low tone,

"Excuse me, but if you want Miss Gladys Ferrol's address, I can give it to you," and then with true English horror at the idea of addressing strangers, she shrank back the picture of confusion. But her words had had their effect. The lady leaned forward across her daughter's blue silk kiltings, and said, anxiously,

"What did you say? You know Gladys Ferrol?"

"No, no," cried Winifred, now completely dismayed, and wondering what Arthur would think of her. "But I said I could give you her address if you are in a hurry to see her, and have only a little time. She is in Exeter, No. 48 Cathedral Street."

The lady had borrowed a pencil from the gentleman on the other side, and began writing the address down with great precision.

"I thought Barnford was the name of the place she lived in," said Mollie Hildreth, who was eager enough to continue the conversation, but Winifred, already rather shocked at herself, only murmured something about not knowing her personally, and Arthur's return interfered with any other confidence. But enough had been said to warrant something further before they all separated. To Arthur's surprise, the

strangers addressed Winifred as they were going down the staircase. Mrs. Hildreth, smiling good-humoredly, laid a hand upon the young girl's arm.

"You needn't mind having given us that address, my dear," she said, pleasantly. "We are old friends of Gladys Ferrol's from America. Who shall I say told us where she was?"

"Oh, it is of no consequence," cried Winnie, smiling, but drawing back; and as the Hildreths nodded again and swept down the staircase, she turned to explain what it all meant to Arthur. But the name of Gladys Ferrol, so potent in its magic for Janey and herself, had little or no charm for Arthur. He tried to consider himself indifferent on the subject of the American heiress, but in reality he felt a certain disgust for the turn things had taken, and even for the poor little heiress herself, who was certainly at this time purchasing her experience of distinction on terms for which neither she nor the dear ones at home had bargained. Arthur, although he could not have said why, had a feeling that the girl who had swept in between them and worldly advantages must be uninteresting, if not actually vulgar, and Winifred's account of Janey's enthusiasm after the visit to the Priory struck him as only further evidence of the younger sister's impetuosity. It is true that a little smile, half of superiority and half of gratification, had been impossible to restrain when Winnie mentioned the fact of Gladys's interest in Sir Guy's portrait, which, as he well knew, was so like himself. But he had said, in a very elder-brother sort

of voice, "Oh, my dear, that's just like a girl! how easy it is for you all to gush!" and Winifred had forgotten all about the conversation, until when going home that very evening Arthur said, suddenly,

"I hope Janey didn't think it necessary to give Gladys Ferrol the entire family history. I can imagine her description of the famous Sir Guy."

"Oh, she said nothing you could object to," cried Winifred. "I wish you didn't feel so prejudiced, Arthur. Of course it's not like papa, who thinks it sinful in us to remember our American cousin's existence, but still I do believe you feel it as much in your own way."

But to this Arthur made no reply. When they were in the house he led the way with a candle up to his own room, where the sign of his late efforts was visible, bringing to the mind of both young people with a shock the hard necessities of their lives—the limitations put upon the young man's work. Winifred cheerfully moved about, setting forth the supper of bread and cheese, while Arthur walked up to his easel and began rubbing out certain touches, and smearing other places with his thumb, drawing back for a frowning, anxious survey of the rough sketch. He stood dreamily contemplating this suggestion for his picture while Winnie cut the bread, now and then glancing at her brother's figure, and at the keen young face which had grown so much older, and showed so many new lines of care and perplexity since he left home a year ago.

Of all the thoughts, ambitions, hopes, and despairs that

found their way into the lad's heart and brain the little sister knew something; enough to make her feel a passionate sort of rebellion against the hardness of circumstances which was grinding his young life in the mill of restraint and limitation. Perhaps for just a moment she too felt a spirit of resentment against Gladys Ferrol, never guessing, of course, how anxious the latter was to do away with all estrangement between them. But while Gladys was theorizing Winifred was facing stern facts. For two days after the concert night Arthur worked in one of those moods which carried everything before it, demonstrating even to himself that he had a certain amount of what he knew to be "afflatus," that touch of the divine which is the true inspiration of poet or painter; and he worked in a condition of exaltation which infected Winifred so far that she proved a capital model, almost incapable of admitting to fatigue, her one delight being to look and listen to Arthur while he worked. He gave her amusing sketches of his work with the other students in the Academy. He was very funny about some of the models, especially a young Irishman with a strong brogue, which Arthur imitated to perfection; and leaving his easel long enough from time to time for their simple meals, or while he stirred up the fire, or stretched his legs by taking a turn about the room, he would assert himself the Arthur of old who had made the Tor House ring with mirth by the execution of a wild sort of dance which set Winifred off into paroxysms of laughter, and which he checked only when they threatened to completely demoralize her as a model.

It might be the young girl's fate to spend many a happy, careless hour with the circumstances of her life all the most inspiring, but I question if there ever came again a period of more unmixed enjoyment than that which included those two days in which she sat for Arthur's picture, and felt as though life might have limitless suggestions of delight. The large meagrely furnished room, with its few advantages for a painter, its odds and ends of drapery, and the one cheerful centre where the fire glowed, and near which she sat, a charming figure in the blue-and-silver gown, with the pale-tinted ribbon about her neck, her face bent above the mandolin, made a framework for the picture she so often called to mind, and which was the outline of the one she dreamed about, wherein she and Janey were to assist Arthur in so many ways while he worked his way to fame and fortune.

They had done a little shopping one afternoon for the further decoration of his room ; Arthur had carried one of his blocks to Hopewell's, and received the thirty shillings he had earned, and they came back to Mickleham Square full of enthusiasm for the picture. But Arthur declared himself suddenly very tired, and instead of availing himself of the last gleams of what had been fairly good light for working, he flung himself down upon the sofa, and suggested Winnie's reading aloud.

All her life long Winifred will remember that the book she opened, sitting near to the window, was her beloved "Lorna Doone;" that the chapter she began and ended, while *Arthur's face seemed to grow paler and more haggard in the*

fading light, was the one in which John Ridd tells of his first meeting with Lorna. The beauty of the little Somerset maiden, the rich verdure of the country, the wildness and grandeur of the Doone Valley, the strong figure of young John, all seemed to rise before her mind, and with an impulse of affection Winifred was thrilled and pleased to be reading what she liked so much with her dearest brother; to have before her the actual suggestions of his work, lifting her eyes from the fascinating page to see that blue brocade flung across a chair, the mandolin hung above it, while the firelight softened all the angles of the room, and subdued its effects into something charmingly picturesque. The daylight had nearly faded before she closed the book, looked out upon the gloomy square, and back to the room, thankful for interior warmth and cheeriness. But Arthur's voice in the dusk startled her.

"I am afraid, Winifred," he was saying, "that I'll have to admit the fact I feel decidedly ill. It's been on me for days past, but I hated to give in."

CHAPTER XXXII.

"ALGY."

THE Crystal Palace presents to a stranger a scene of bewildering and delightful novelty, and on a certain morning in February the Hildreths, accompanied by Gladys Ferrol, paid their first visit to the renowned building, in a frame of mind calculated to accept everything, from the stalls with their curious collection of wares to the performance of a grand oratorio later in the day, in a spirit of joyous approval. The Hildreths had lost no time in finding out Miss Dymond's lodgings in Exeter and discovering Gladys Ferrol, rather a pale and thin edition of her old self, but overjoyed at meeting friends from home. But how they had arranged this visit of a week to London not one of the party could have told. Miss Dymond intended to have some missionary meetings in Barnford about the same time, and it may have been that she was just as well pleased to be rid of Gladys for a few days, and she had stipulated that Jarvis should be sent to London with her. At all events, the end was accomplished, and one soft spring-like morning Gladys found herself with the Hildreths at the Langham *Hotel*, where it seemed to her that the six months in Eng-

land among strangers might also have been a dream, so like home was it to be with her old Harringford friends.

The talk, if at first confused and exciting, was full of associations with the people and things she had left. Mrs. Hildreth expressed her delight over the fact that Gladys was not a bit changed by her rank and fortune, although both she and Mollie, in the privacy of their own room, decided that the girl was looking badly, and had lost much of her former vivacity. But Gladys, who had been thoroughly dispirited over everything only a week before, was conscious no longer of any change in herself. She was radiantly happy, and even while the Hildreths were talking of her in this compassionate way she was kneeling on the hearth-rug in their pretty sitting-room at the hotel, holding her hands out towards the blaze of the fire—more because of a sympathy with its genial glow than from any need of warmth. Indeed, on this fine, spring-like afternoon the fire was a mere pretence—indulged in, I fancy, more because of Mrs. Hildreth's fondness for everything at the hotel which is considered an "extra" than from any chill in the atmosphere. Signs of the fresh young season had been evident enough in the blooming country Gladys had just left, and even up here in London the fogs had rolled away, and to Gladys, in the midst of her happy reverie, came the cry of flower-venders in the street below. Ah yes, thought the young girl, the winter had really passed away. The spring-time was at hand, and with it there was sure to come a new stock of endurance—at least until the period of her guardian's return.

How delightful it was to see the Hildreths, she thought, and how queer to have to remember that she had ever thought them anything but what was most agreeable! What an enchanting journey it had been up to London, with talk about the homestead, Aunt Sarah, Cousin Bert, and Miss Lois! about the Lymans and the Merrills; even such details as the fact of the Montgomerys having offered their lawn to the tennis-club fairly thrilling Gladys with interest. When Mollie said, "Oh, you ought to see George Sloane now, Gladys! you'd think he was twenty-five years old the way he acts, and he scarcely goes with our set at all," the dear delights of Harringford arose like a flash before the girl's mind, yet like some far-away dream of the past she recalled the day when, regardless of French verbs or *dicté*, she had suggested sending the precocious George a wisp of straw tied up with a blue ribbon!

By some queer process of thought her mind reverted to the portrait of Sir Guy Montescue, and she had to hear over again Mollie's account of meeting Winifred and her brother in St. James's Hall; and Mollie in turn was greatly interested in everything that Gladys had to tell of these fascinating although elusive cousins, and this again brought up the oft repeated "Don't you remember?" in the girls' talk, for Mollie recalled the evening at the homestead when she had suggested a possible romance.

"And now you've found a hero and heroine," she had said, leaning forward from her seat opposite Gladys, while *Mrs. Hildreth* dozed, and the train rushed wildly on towards



"GOOD GRACIOUS!" CRIED MOLLY. "HOW COULD YOU DO IT?"

London. "I quite agree with you," Mollie continued, "that there ought to be something for them." And then—was it from the exuberance of her delight in finding herself with her old companion, or because for the first time a sense of romance appealed to her?—Gladys impulsively related Sarah's story, and told of her letter promising the ten thousand pounds.

"Good gracious!" cried Mollie. "How could you do it? But I don't believe your guardian will let you give it; that is—all."

"He can't help himself," said Gladys, proudly. "He hasn't been made the keeper of my word of honor yet awhile. But, Mollie," she added, anxiously, "don't tell any one, *please*." And if Mollie said nothing, it was not because she had not come to a swift conclusion as to what she ought to do. But in the delights of really seeing London, tourist fashion, with her home friends, even the Beresfords and her associations with them were almost forgotten. It was the first time that any personal enjoyment of her money had come into Gladys's life. Now there was profound satisfaction in the thought that she would only be obeying Miss Dymond's injunctions in drawing upon Mr. Melrose for whatever money she required; and Jarvis, who was thoroughly fond and proud of her little mistress, lost no time in suggesting a variety of purchases to her, while Mrs. Hildreth was well pleased to have Gladys defer to her in such matters, and to discuss with the maid such details of the young girl's wardrobe as might be beyond Gladys's knowledge.

"You see, 'm," Jarvis remarked, "Miss Ferrol ought to be lightening her mourning a bit now, and mauve would look lovely on her, or a costume of black-and-white silk, with white feathers in her 'at."

Upon which suggestion Gladys laid aside her crape, and felt herself considerably relieved by the introduction of mauve and white into her toilets. She had no foolish pride, fortunately, in her wealth, yet what girl of fifteen would not be pleased and a little fluttered by this power of making herself appear to the best advantage before friends who had known her in the days when a half-worn silk gown of Miss Lois's made over constituted her very best dress; and Mollie enjoyed heartily the fact that her friend was to be, no doubt, a young lady of fashionable distinction. They had made a very agreeable call upon the Bruces, in return for the prompt appearance of Miss Bruce and Barbara at the Langham Hotel, and now on the day when we find them at the Crystal Palace they were debating in what manner Lady Marchmont could be approached. But other "sights" were in immediate contemplation.

"Which would be the best place, do you suppose," Mrs. Hildreth said, as they found themselves near the Moorish portions of the palace, "for us to see the Princess of Wales when she comes in?"

Gladys and Mollie looked in the direction of the largest crowd. It had been announced that the princess would be present at the oratorio, and accordingly the best seats were *being readily sold*. Our party had made the tour of the

building, partaken of a cold lunch, and were now thinking about seating themselves in full time for the performance; but Mrs. Hildreth suddenly discovered some Washington friends—a very tall old gentleman, who with his wife and sister were gazing about in a helpless fashion, when the Hildreths, with their freshly acquired information, rushed upon them. A great many hurried questions and answers and hand-shakings and suggestions ensued, and in the midst of this cheerful confusion Gladys heard her own name pronounced in tones which, if shrill, were unmistakably cordial, and she turned to confront Mrs. John and Sarah, in gorgeous attire, and escorted by the discriminating Algy and a young man very conspicuously dressed, and who stared at Mollie and Gladys as though they were a different race of beings.

Mrs. John held out her hand with an air of claiming cousinship, while she exclaimed,

"Well, I declare, if this isn't a nice surprise! To think of meeting you here!"

A glance towards Mollie from the entire party made Gladys see that an introduction was inevitable, and yet it was with difficulty that she said, "Mollie—Miss Hildreth—this is Mrs. John Beresford and Miss Sarah Beresford."

Mrs. John laughed good-humoredly. "You've got the name now, my dear, in full," she said. "This is my son Algernon, and his friend Mr. Smith."

Algernon bowed, and in a somewhat shamedfaced manner shook hands with the girls, while Mr. Smith contrived to lift his hat, and murmured something in which the words

“’appy” and “’ope” brought the color to the girls’ faces, while they tried to restrain a smile. Mrs. Hildreth had heard or rather heeded nothing of all this—the murmur of unfamiliar voices not attracting her attention in such a talkative crowd; but supposing that Gladys and Mollie were closely following in her wake, she had drifted away with the anxious Mr. and Mrs. Weston, and when the girls turned to look about them they found to their dismay that she was no longer to be seen.

A moment of exclamations and great confusion ensued. Gladys would have rushed forward into the crowd to find Mrs. Hildreth, but Mrs. John laid a heavy hand upon her arm, and Sarah said,

“The best thing for us to do is to stand still here while Algy and Joseph go and look for them.”

And the girls being forced to accept this really sensible advice, they found themselves whirled by Sarah into a sort of recess, where they could all sit down on a bench from which, as Mrs. John remarked, “they could see everything.”

Fifteen minutes of suspense and annoyance passed, during which Sarah tried to be very friendly and communicative, and informed Gladys in rather a loud whisper that she had told pa and ma all about it, and she really believed it was going to be pa’s salvation. What she *did not* tell, however, was that pa, in the exhilaration consequent upon his daughter’s astounding piece of news, had entered into certain little business transactions which he called “speculations.” A prudent Jewish gentleman who carried on a very large busi-

ness in an obscure office, having so far investigated the whole matter as to feel himself free to advance a little money to pa, with which he had entered upon his former field of battle invigorated and refreshed.

The young men returned. They could see nothing of the American party, and while Gladys was filled with uneasiness Mollie had begun to extract a little fun out of this complication. Of course it would be easy enough to get back to the Langham, and meanwhile there was a great deal of amusement to be had out of Mrs. John's party, and a spice of adventure mixed with it, which she for one welcomed heartily. Under pretence of renewing the search, they all started for a tour of the building, reaching the concert-hall just as the oratorio began, where from the gallery they swept the lower part of the auditorium below with eyes eager to detect Mrs. Hildreth's figure or the Weston party in the space reserved for the guinea seats. But even this scrutiny, so anxiously carried on by Gladys, failed to discover their friends, and the air of banter with which Mollie was carrying on a conversation with Algy added to poor Gladys's uneasiness.

"I think the best thing we can do," she said, trying to attract Mollie's attention, "is to go home at once and send Jarvis here to look for Mrs. Hildreth. She is sure to know that we would make our own way home."

"Oh, don't think of such a thing!" cried Sarah. "Why not make a day of it, now that we are all 'ere? It isn't often that Algy and Mr. Smith get a holiday."

"I don't see why we need hurry," Mollie put in; and Mrs. Beresford adding that she should take it as real unfriendly of Gladys to break up such a pleasant party, there seemed to our little heroine no means of escape.

Mollie Hildreth was, unfortunately for Gladys's peace of mind on this occasion, one of those girls who think a good time consists in anything which can be characterized as a "lark." And accordingly half an hour had not passed before her peals of laughter were as frequent as Algy's, and when Mrs. John and Sarah proposed that they should all adjourn to her house for a friendly cup of tea, after which Algy should escort the young ladies home, Gladys found herself again silenced and overruled. Added to her inability to influence Mollie, who was in a regular gale, was a dread of appearing to be ashamed of people who were really so good-natured, and as a matter of fact her relations. So it came about that Algy was despatched home half an hour in advance of the rest. An audible order from his mother to "see that there was sausages" proved that high tea was in contemplation; and about four o'clock, to her great discomfort and annoyance, Gladys found herself the only quiet one of the party who were making their way from the underground railway-station to Mrs. John's shabby-genteel abode at Westham Common.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

A SOCIABLE TEA-PARTY.

ALGY had not come home a moment too soon. His announcement caused a general revolution in the appearance of things at "Alexandra Villa," by which royal-sounding name Mrs. Beresford's house was known. If an odor of stale tobacco and beer clung to the sitting-room, it had been put to rights by Rosamond Jane, and Captain John, with the appearance of very recent ablutions, and having exchanged his dressing-gown for a shabby, well-worn velvet coat, was ready to receive them. As he was really a man of tolerably good education and with some traditions of refinement, it may be inferred that only long habit and his naturally vagabond tendency had accustomed him to what was vulgar in his surroundings; and in spite of Sarah's blunt statements regarding him, she was secretly proud of her father's battered sort of good looks, and "the air of the gentleman," as she put it, which clung to him in spite of his fallen fortunes.

But Gladys, accustomed only to men of a very different sort, shrank in actual horror from the captain, who approached her with a jaunty air of familiarity, and to her dis-

may took both her hands in his and kissed her affectionately, French fashion, first on one cheek and then on the other.

"Not much of a place to welcome Miss Ferrol to," the captain said, leading the way into the sitting-room; "but, after all, the heart is the thing to judge by."

"And something good to eat ain't to be sneezed at," put in Sarah, who was afraid of her father's overdoing matters. She telegraphed an inquiry about the condition of things up-stairs to Rosamond Jane, and then turned to the visitors, saying, "You'd better come up and lay off your hats in my room," and led the way up the dingy staircase and into a bedroom where some hasty improvements also had been effected, and where, to the unspeakable relief of both, they were left alone.

Mollie cast one look at the door as it closed upon Sarah's figure, and then flinging herself into a chair, fairly rocked back and forth in her endeavors to repress her laughter. Gladys, unable to help joining in some of Mollie's hilarity, and yet impressed most by other elements in the affair, begged her to stop.

"My dear," cried Mollie, when she could speak, "I wouldn't have missed this for anything. I think it's perfectly rich. Did you ever see anything like that Sarah? I can hardly wait to get home to tell mamma all about it. Of course we never need know them anywhere again. Oh, I forgot," she exclaimed, catching sight of Gladys's look of distress, "they are your cousins, and I suppose you will have to know them. But *oh*, that ridiculous Algy!"

"It would serve you right," said Gladys, "if he came down to the Langham to see you. What did you mean, Mollie, by carrying on with him in that way?"

"Fun, my dear," said Mollie, smoothing her profuse waves of hair before the little mirror, and looking quite ready to renew the same sort of thing. "I wouldn't have missed this for worlds. Oh, poor Gladys! to think of their being your relations!"

"I just hope they'll stick to you as friends," rejoined Gladys. But Mollie only laughed again, and a moment later Sarah appeared, to escort them back to the parlor. The half-hour that followed was one of misery to Gladys, who was dismayed by questions put and answered back and forth between Mollie and Mrs. John, each of whom was bent on discovering all she could about Gladys's affairs; but there was a slight relief in Rosamond Jane's presence, her quiet voice and lady-like ways of speaking, something about her suggesting to Gladys's mind those other Beresfords, of whom she had heard nothing in so long a time.

The captain contrived to express his profound appreciation of what he called her "sense of justice," promising on a future occasion to give her some details of family history, while Sarah did the honors first at the tea-table, then of the family photograph album, wherein she was surprised to encounter such faces as Miss Dymond's and old Lady Marchmont's. Sarah did not explain that Mary Jarvis had been the donor of these photographs, but she turned the pages quickly to show off her uncle Peter's family, each one ar-

rayed in his or her best clothes—one tall, thin little girl being photographed beside a large chair, against which reposed a huge gold-headed cane.

"You see," said Sarah, in explanation of this curious addition to the picture, "uncle he meant to have his cane in his own photograph, and he forgot all about it, so he stuck it in when Arabella was taken; and anyhow he thought it would keep her from looking sort of lonely, she's such a thin, peaky-looking thing anyhow. I hate those kind of children!" cried Sarah, giving the offensive page a slap over, and revealing Algy in a large check suit, and with his most seductive expression and general holiday appearance.

Yes, thought Gladys to herself, as she mechanically turned the pages of the offensive book, these people certainly were her cousins—as much of a legacy from Colonel Dymond as all his money; and as Captain Paget's view of life was wholly unknown to her, she had not the least idea but that some sort of friendship with them would be one of the moral necessities of her life in days to come. And had she not, after all, brought it in a measure upon herself? But, for all the lack of refinement in the house and its inmates, their very evident struggle with life appealed to the girl, and, relieved as she was when the hour of departure came, she could not find it in her heart to regret the offer of substantial assistance she had made. Indeed she contrived to draw Sarah to one side, and ask her if one of those temporary offers of assistance might not be consoling just now; and two golden

sovereigns which Gladys had slipped into her purse that morning found their way into Sarah's hand.

The girls resolutely declined on leaving to have any escort farther than the underground railway, declaring that at the other end it would be easy to take a cab to the hotel. And so the captain, Algy, and Mr. Smith, who had escorted them to the train, were forced to make their adieus from the platform, while Gladys and Mollie, leaning back in the compartment which they had to themselves, were free to express themselves over the adventures of the afternoon.

In spite of a desire to join in Mollie's laughter, poor Gladys felt as though she could have cried as she thought of so many elements in the household they had just left which would jar upon her. Not a shadow of anything in common with the inmates of "Alexandra Villa" had she, and yet, poor child, she had a feeling that the future might be pledged to them—at least to a sort of intercourse or association with them; and Mollie's explosive descriptions of Algy, and all the nonsense he had talked, failed to amuse her as much as such a recital might at another time.

How bright and inviting the hotel sitting-room looked as they entered it, in spite of Mrs. Hildreth's perturbed and anxious manner! She had to explain her own disappearance, and then her wild search for them; but it was only when alone in their bedroom that Mollie did full justice to the visit at Mrs. John's, and regardless of Gladys's injunctions, told the story of the ten thousand pounds promised in Gladys's letter.

"My dear," exclaimed Mrs. Hildreth, "it will never do to let that sort of thing go on; and now we must see that Gladys gets back at once to Devonshire, for I found a letter from your father saying we must reach him the day after to-morrow in Paris. We must see that she starts for Barnford to-morrow morning."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW.

"I MUST tell you frankly, miss, that the hospital is the best place for your brother"—the speaker, who was a young physician, paused half a moment, and then added, in a compassionate tone—"under the circumstances."

They were standing in the little hall outside of Arthur's door, and Winifred was thankful for the friendly darkness, for, as she turned away her head, great tears ran unchecked down her cheeks.

"If I could help you in any other way," the kind-hearted young man went on, "you may be sure that I would do it; but you see how it is. Your brother has a low fever, and is likely to be ill, perhaps very ill, for weeks to come. The Browns are good enough in their way, but we can't expect good-nature to last too long, and you see your brother needs regular nursing and attendance. There is no chance of moving him by railway for some time—and, moreover, you say your mother is so ill you cannot even let her know how sick your brother is. It is hard enough, poor child, for you to bear it, but I am very certain the only thing to do is to let me take him to the hospital. I know the prej-

udice against it, but I will try to see that he is well taken care of."

Winifred clasped her hands together, and pressed them heavily against her breast for a moment. She could not speak for weeping, and when at last she found the power to utter a few words her voice was so choked by sobs that the young doctor had to bend his head to catch her meaning.

"Oh, I cannot, sir," she was saying. "I will stay and work for Mrs. Brown, or do anything to save him from being taken there. Oh, if you only knew, sir, how hard he was working! and the picture!"—Winifred's sobs broke forth afresh—"if he only could have finished it! We were so happy over it."

The doctor smiled sadly in the dim light. He had seen too much of life even in his brief career as a physician not to appreciate the misery which was wringing the young girl's heart while she spoke. During the two weeks of Arthur's illness he had admired beyond description the pluck and energy of the little nurse, who had followed his directions with a fidelity and accuracy which had delighted him professionally, and increased his sympathy when he found out the terrible strait that they were in. It had been revealed to him by some bitter disclosures from Mrs. Brown, who had declared the day before that she could not keep the Beresfords any longer without pay, nor furnish them with things from her own larder. Perhaps Mrs. Brown did not intend to be unkind or unsympathetic; but business was business, she told the doctor, and what were the Beresfords

to her that she should keep the boy from going to the hospital?

"And I'll be out of pocket a good thirty shillings as it is," she said, angrily, "for I don't suppose they can ever pay what's owing now."

The doctor was a poor man himself, or he would have settled his patient's accounts with Mrs. Brown then and there. His services were all that he could offer, and looking things squarely in the face on this spring morning, he had been forced to tell Winifred the truth.

"And what could I do?" cried Winifred, suddenly lifting her tear-laden eyes to the doctor—"for I wouldn't go away and leave him. Would they take me at the hospital too if I work for them?"

"I am afraid not," Doctor Williams answered, compassionately, "but I could see that he was put into good hands. I'll be back again in a few hours, and meanwhile try and make up your mind to let me do as I say."

He shook her hand, and went down the staircase hurriedly, while Winnie wiped her eyes, and turning the handle of the door very softly, went into Arthur's half-darkened room. Her first involuntary glance was at the sufferer in his bed. The mere shadow of his former self, the poor boy lay there asleep, but moving uneasily from side to side, the fever which had wasted his fine young frame, and brought those sunken hollows to his eyes and cheeks, not yet at its crisis, but burning steadily, like a flame that must wear itself and its object away. Winnie did not attempt to restrain her

tears while she gazed down at him; but although she had rarely given way to her feelings, she knew now that the weeping was a luxury not to be indulged in. Still moving softly, lest she should disturb the sleeper, she went over to the window, where she sat down, trying to think of some way out of the terrible condition in which she found herself and poor Arthur placed.

A glance around the room showed that already the poor girl had been compelled to dispose of whatever would bring ready money. Mrs. Brown had of course realized the state of things from the first, and had suggested to Winifred the sale of various articles, undertaking to dispose of them for her, but even the pieces of drapery so cherished by her brother had brought but a few shillings. And now they were heavily in Mrs. Brown's debt—a fact which that lady took good care to keep before Winifred's eyes—and two shillings and sixpence was all that remained in money for their support. For three days Winifred had been living on bread and coffee, with some potatoes, and once a boiled egg, and she well knew that her power of endurance must give way under the double strain of fasting and anxious nursing.

With much grumbling Mrs. Brown had spent part of the nights in Arthur's room, and, as she well knew, the doctor was right in saying their services had come to an end. It was not possible now for her to go down-stairs, poor child, on any errand, without the humiliation of a scornful look from some one, or a taunt, veiled, it is true, but none the less stinging to the poor girl, who felt often, as she mounted the

stairs to the attic room—where, for all she dared hope to the contrary, Arthur, her dearest brother, the pride and hope of the family, might be dying—as if her very heart would break. He rambled from time to time, and seemed scarcely conscious for hours together of what was going on about him, but in his wanderings was a pathos that was torture to his poor little nurse. He talked of home, of the Devonshire spring-time they had loved so well in time that might be only yesterday, and then would drift on to the work he had been doing, to idle sentences about the mandolin, the girl in the blue brocaded gown and wearing the little satin slippers, and then, bitterest of all, would come revelations of what the poor boy had been enduring before Winifred's arrival, and he would fancy himself walking about the streets of London trying to forget that he was hungry while the other fellows at the Academy had their luncheon.

All this would have been hard enough for poor Winnie's ears and heart had she possessed the things needed now for his comfort; but how much worse was it to listen to such fragments from the past, knowing that the present was as dismally pitiful a tale! To write home would be useless, for her mother was ill in bed, suffering perhaps in some degree from the very same cause which oppressed Arthur and Winifred in London.

The door was opened unceremoniously as Winifred sat in the window, a great prayer for deliverance rising in her heart, and Mrs. Brown came into the room. The expression of her face as she approached her lodger told its own story.

"You'll have to get him ready for the hospital," she said, in a hard voice, and glancing at the bed. "It's all very well to be charitable and kind when you can afford it, but my patience with this sort of thing, I may as well tell you, is at an end. I shall see the doctor for myself when he comes, and say it can't go on another day. It will take me a week anyway," she added, surveying the walls and ceilings with a sniff, "to get the place cleaned and aired for a new lodger."

"Mrs. Brown," said Winifred, struggling to keep back the tears, "I am going out to see if an art-dealer my brother knew will do anything for him. Could you or Susan stay here for just an hour?"

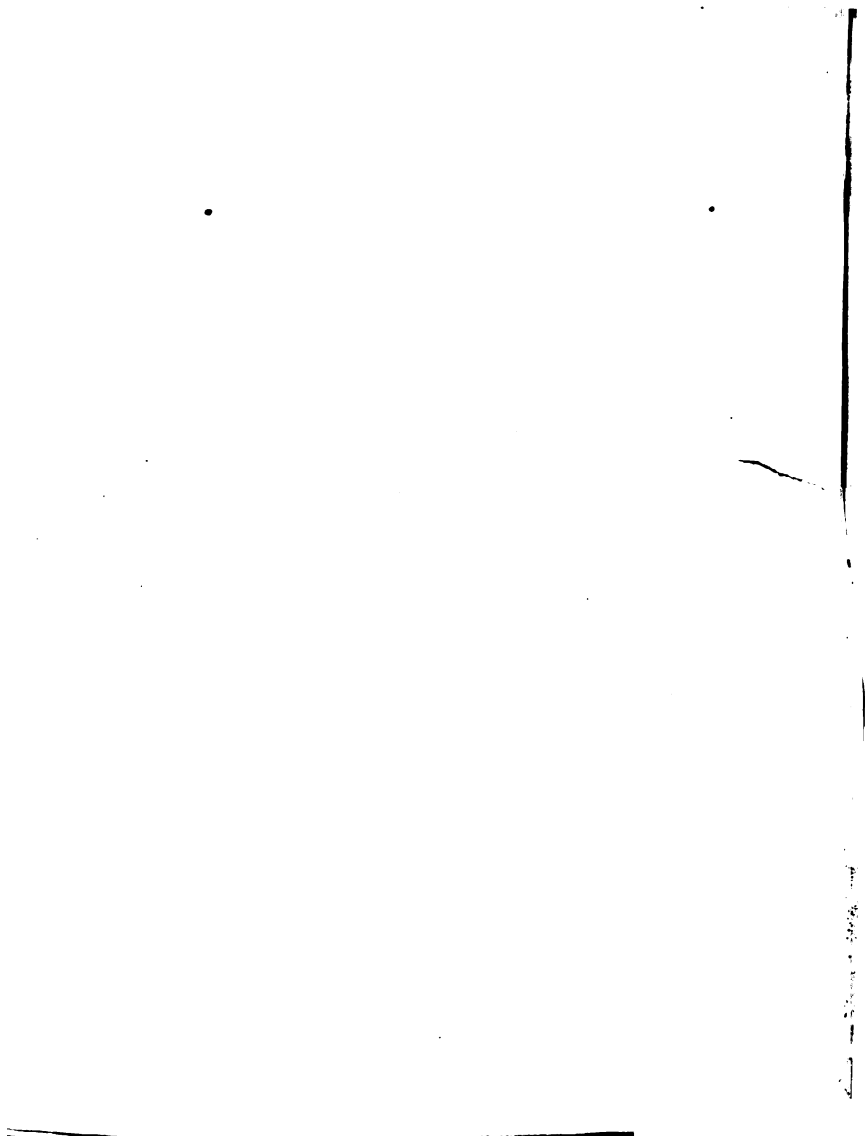
Mrs. Brown was inclined to refuse angrily, but it occurred to her that the interval might afford an opportunity for finding out just what resources the young Beresfords had left, and so she consented to take Winifred's place, while the latter, casting an anxious look of love and pity at the sleeper, sped away down the long staircase and out into the street.

The day was a beautiful one, sunshiny and full of spring fragrance and charm, but what a mockery this brilliancy in nature seemed to poor little Winnie as she hastened along on her forlorn hope! The faces of happy people as she passed them seemed only so many additional drops of misery in her cup, and once or twice, as she passed groups of laughing people coming out of shops laden with purchases, it was hard to feel resigned to her own and Arthur's lot in life.

The art-dealer's was reached. Before the door a fine open carriage was drawn up, and in it, to her surprise, Winifred



"YOU'LL HAVE TO GET HIM READY FOR THE HOSPITAL," SHE SAID, IN A HARD VOICE.



saw seated the young girl whom she had seen that eventful and happy night so long ago, as it now seemed to her, at St. James's Hall. But Mollie was looking in another direction; and so failed to recognize in the pale, shabbily dressed girl who entered Mr. Fuller's shop the happy young creature who had given Gladys Ferrol's address, and Winifred was too anxious to care for recognition. She hastened into the shop, and after some delay found an opportunity of speaking to young Mr. Fuller. She told him briefly about Arthur's illness, and asked if it would be possible for her to sell some designs for crewel-work she had made.

"I really have not time to attend to you now, miss," the man said, as politely as possible, and glancing towards an inner room where a customer was waiting. "Suppose you come back to-morrow?"

He bowed and moved away. Winifred was sick and faint from exhaustion as well as from disappointment. She turned aside, leaning her hand heavily on a stand close by, feeling the objects near her go round and round, while she endeavored to keep herself from actually falling. Out of the mist a familiar face and voice seemed to come, and with a sudden effort she took a step forward in the direction from which Gladys Ferrol and young Mr. Fuller were approaching, the former all obsequious deference to the order Gladys was leaving for Mrs. Hildreth.

"We are going away to-day," Gladys was saying, "and please be sure not to disappoint us."

Going away! The hope which for just one moment had

taken possession of poor Winnie's heart faded, and Gladys passed her by. Should she move after her out into the pitiless sunshine, and standing at the richly cushioned carriage, tell her tale? I believe that she would have done so, love for Arthur overcoming all sentiments of pride, but the poor child's physical strength failed her, and while she was struggling to move, Gladys disappeared, the dealer accompanying her with every mark of deference to her carriage door, but bringing back poor Winifred a very chilling countenance.

Gladys Ferrol seated herself comfortably in the carriage, while she and Mollie held a brief consultation as to where they should go next. Mollie consulted her little watch—a sparkling toy of a thing which she had purchased in Paris—and as she raised her eyes she exclaimed, suddenly, “Why, there she is!” and pointed to Winifred's figure threading its way across the crowded street. Gladys looked, uttering a little cry of dismay. They were too late to follow her, but in that moment Gladys had a swift impression of a change in the girl whose pretty curves and bright dark eyes she had admired so much. Winifred looked haggard and worn, and every movement betrayed exhaustion and disheartenment.

“Why, I saw her come out of that store,” said Mollie; “but I did not recognize her at first.”

“Wait!” cried Gladys. And without another word of explanation she had sprung from the carriage, and was again with Mr. Fuller, whose face speedily wreathed itself in smiles on her approach.

It took five minutes to make him understand that her er-

rand was to find out the address of the young girl who had just left the shop; and Gladys was compelled to say, "She is my cousin, but I don't know where she is stopping," before the art-dealer explained that Winifred had come there hoping to sell some designs for crewel-work.

"I am afraid—pardon me for speaking of it—she is in a great deal of trouble. Would you be kind enough to say I will look at her designs with pleasure?"

Gladys scarcely heeded what the man was saying. She stood still a moment before returning to the carriage, looking at the address he had written — "No. 58 Mickleham Square"—and pondering in her mind what she had better do. She had been quick to perceive that Mrs. Hildreth was anxious to have her safely in Miss Dymond's hands, and knew that she would not encourage her in seeing Winifred. But she was sure that her cousin was in some trouble, and she felt that she could not leave London without knowing for herself just what it was. The carriage was at her own disposal, however, and a few hours of liberty remained to her.

"I must go and see my cousin Winifred Beresford, Mollie," she said, before taking her place. "I'll tell you what we can do: you can leave me at her house in Mickleham Square, and then go back and send Jarvis for me."

Mollie stood too much in awe of Gladys's position and fortune to venture upon any remonstrance. And so it chanced that ten minutes later Gladys found herself alone in the hall-way of No. 58, Mrs. Brown, still aggrieved and indignant, advancing from the sitting-room to speak to her.

CHAPTER XXXV.

TO THE RESCUE.

MRS. BROWN was by no means particularly impressed with this first visitor for Winifred. In the dim light of the hall she saw only a young girl dressed simply in slight mourning, and in answer to inquiries for the Beresfords she said, sharply,

"Yes, they're here, but not for any length of time. He's got low fever, and is to go to the 'orspital to-day. I'm tired out with keeping them for nothing."

Gladys's heart swelled with pity and indignation. Poor Winifred! poor Arthur! To think of finding her hero for the first time in so dismal a plight! She hated to discuss them with this woman, and yet felt it might be her only chance of discovering their needs.

"Are they in need of anything especial?" she said, a little timidly. Mrs. Brown looked her over with a contemptuous air. She gave a little short laugh.

"Well, I guess *you* can't help much," she said, in a tone which sent the color flaming into Gladys's cheeks. But if you know anybody belonging to them, you'd better say they're about as badly off as anybody outside the work'us."

"Oh!" cried Gladys, feeling shocked and bewildered by

the suggestion. More might have passed between the two but for Winifred's entrance. She was pale and weary from her fruitless errand, and came into the shadowy hall with steps that almost tottered ; but Gladys sprang forward, and put out her hand to this unknown young cousin, as though they had been friends for life.

"Oh, Winifred," she exclaimed, "I am so sorry! Will you not take me to your room at once?"

Winifred was in that frame of mind when everything seemed unreal except the fact that Arthur might be dying, and she powerless to save him. She had decided, as she threaded her way back to the square, that the hospital was indeed a terrible necessity ; and even when she found Gladys Ferrol in the hall-way, and felt the warm sympathetic grasp of her fingers, it did not occur to her that relief might be at hand. She felt startled and bewildered, yet too dazed to take it all in, but she led the way up the three flights of stairs, leaving Mrs. Brown grumbling and muttering, "It's time for them to pack up." Her examination of poor Arthur's resources had resulted in her taking down to the sitting-room such articles as she thought might be salable, if even a few shillings only were the result, and she had meant to waylay Winifred and express her wish that they should be out of the house before evening.

"He may be asleep," was the first thing which Winnie said to her companion. She turned the handle of the door gently, and Gladys, feeling her heart beat high with anxiety and compassion, followed her into the darkened room.

There he lay, her hero, the living presentment of the young soldier who had fought and died for Prince Charlie! Gladys felt a terrible choking sensation in her throat as, looking for the first time upon the lad who somehow had filled so exalted a place in her imagination, she realized that Winifred's fears might not be in vain. Neither of the two girls had ever witnessed death, and yet that instinct which perhaps came of the consciousness of strong young vitality in their own veins made them feel the danger—the dread shadow that filled the room and threatened to reach the heart and pulse of the young life for which Gladys felt at that moment she would give her very fortune to save.

The boy opened his eyes wearily, but there was no consciousness in their glance. Winifred put a cooling drink to his lips, turned his pillow, and knelt beside him, stroking the hair back from his brow with the tenderness of a little mother, while Gladys, unable to restrain her tears, turned aside and walked over to the window, where she stood trying to think just what she could do. It was silly, she knew, to spend her time crying when every moment was so precious, but the sobs would come, and Gladys found herself mingling all manner of homesick and lonely feelings with this sudden grief for her cousin Arthur. While she stood there a hansom came rattling around the corner, and to her relief she saw Mary Jarvis's figure descend, and presently heard her rap upon the door. Five or ten minutes of low-toned consultation with Winifred passed. The girls stood together in the window, holding hands and laying the foun-

dations of firm friendship in that little talk, and it was easy for Winnie to unburden herself to so tender, so sympathetic a listener. Before she went away Gladys had heard the story of her cousin's coming to London, of her two happy days with Arthur, then of his sudden illness.

"And wouldn't you like to see the picture he had begun?" whispered Winifred, who was proud of her brother's genius even in the midst of their misery. She turned to look for the last effort of the tired hand, and uttered a little, half-suppressed exclamation of dismay.

"It has been taken," she said to Gladys, "while I was out."

"Never mind," whispered the other. "Dear Winnie, I am going away for just a little while; but do not be afraid, I shall be back soon again."

One more look was given at the pale face of her hero upon the pillow, the dark hair tossed back, the eyes with their black lashes showing by contrast the intense pallor of the face. But Gladys took away with her something more than this. In all the story of their trouble, Winifred, young as she was, had betrayed that instinctive trust and faith in God's providence which thrilled through Gladys as she listened, and made her wonder if she had not been just a little too despondent over the trials of her own life that winter. Winifred had said, "Mamma always tells us that we must try to feel sure that good is meant in every trial," and this with no apparent desire to preach to her visitor or place herself in the light of a martyr. Its simplicity, the matter-of-fact way in which she had stated it, had sent it swift as an

arrow into Gladys's heart. She came down-stairs feeling, for all her anxiety, quiet and humble, and was surprised to find that Mrs. Brown met her with a decidedly altered demeanor.

Mary Jarvis had been talking to Arthur's landlady, and the true feeling for the "family" had entirely changed the aspect of affairs. Mrs. Brown was only afraid that she had offended Gladys, and received her with a consciousness that she was talking to the heiress of Colonel Dymond's thousands.

"My young lady will set things right, I can tell you"—that had been one of Jarvis's significant speeches while she waited for Gladys in Mrs. Brown's sanctum—"and as for the Beresfords, you'd better be careful how you treat them!" Jarvis had been wise enough to know the effect that all this would produce, and she went on enjoying Mrs. Brown's discomfort and anxiety to hear more. "I don't know as we shall be satisfied with the medical attendance. You may be sure Miss Ferrol will see that he has the best that's going."

Gladys's frame of mind was such that she was only a trifle amused by Mrs. Brown's obsequiousness and Jarvis's pointedly deferential way of treating her. She was anxious to go out on her mission to secure assistance for the Beresfords, and while she had no intention of being curt to Mrs. Brown, her indifference to that good lady's profuse apologies and inquiries for "the dear young gentleman" produced the effect of fine ladyism which increased Mrs. Brown's respect, and made her all the more servile in her attention. Jarvis was

despatched for a hansom, but it was only when they were seated in it, when Gladys was in the act of drawing on her gloves, that a thought like an inspiration flashed across her mind. Aware that neither she nor Winifred was old enough to judge for themselves in this matter, she had been wondering to whom she could apply for counsel as well as assistance, and at this moment a gleam of the soft spring sunshine fell upon her little sapphire ring. Her Fairy Godmother. Why had she not remembered her at once?

"Jarvis," she said, speaking hurriedly, and with the glow of excitement in her cheeks and eyes, "I am going to Lady Marchmont's. Please tell the man to drive as quick as he can to No. 48 Park Lane."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

WHAT CAN I DO?

LADY MARCHMONT had spent some six weeks in the visits to the country which were the delight and pastime of her winter, but she was always glad to get back to her own fireside—to the windows overlooking that charming street in Mayfair, the Park, and the first bloom of the season. She, who professed herself such a cynic, was in fact one of the most hospitable of hostesses in London; but she was very exclusive about her mornings, and Mr. Gott, the well-trained factotum who had served her ladyship faithfully for forty years, knew better than to usher strangers into the drawing-room before two o'clock. Lady Marchmont would have had her friends believe that these morning hours were devoted to purely selfish pursuits, but in fact they were absorbed by a great many occupations for other people which must have been laid aside during the London season had the old lady not reserved some time carefully to herself. The house was one of the very prettiest in Park Lane. From the dark green doorway one stepped directly up the street, but all residents of London are aware of the quiet and exclusiveness of the neighborhood. The drawing-room

was on the floor above the entrance, and had a large curved window besides a narrower one—and both, in spite of the early stage of the blossom season, were gay with flowers, their bloom seeming to Gladys, as she approached the house, to be part of the soft, sweet sunshine that was filling all the morning. What a contrast to the dingy square and the stricken household she had left! But Gladys felt her spirits revive, and something of the joyousness of the weather found an answer in her own heart as she descended from the hansom, while Jarvis knocked upon the little green door.

Gladys, who was so full of the importance of her mission that she could hardly wait to make the necessary inquiries, was dismayed upon being told that her ladyship never received visitors in the morning. Gott politely ushered the young girl into the morning-room on the right of the hall, while Jarvis returned to the cab; but he was fixed in his determination that the visitor should proceed no further.

“Oh, I know that she will see me,” cried Gladys, “and perhaps she would not like it if you did not ask her.” She hesitated a moment, and then, coloring, drew the sapphire ring from her finger. “There,” she said, smiling; “please take that to Lady Marchmont, and tell her it is because—because of that I want to see her.”

Gott received the message with an evident air of disapproval, but he could no longer object to letting Lady Marchmont know who was waiting for her. Gladys moved about the little room, full of costly elegancies and trifles, with great impatience, while the butler went slowly up the softly car-

peted staircase, looking down at the palm of his hand where the little shining circlet reposed. It was a queer way of reaching her ladyship, and Gott was half ashamed to be the bearer of such a silly kind of message. He knew nothing, however, of the little streak of romance in his mistress's nature, and did not in the least understand the look of amusement, and yet pleasure, which lighted up Lady Marchmont's face when he stiffly gave Gladys's message and handed over the ring.

"Bring her up at once, Gott," cried her ladyship, with rising excitement. She pushed away the papers on her davenport, and went forward to meet her unexpected little guest.

If Gladys's mind had not been all absorbed by the Beresfords' trouble she would have been enchanted with the drawing-room she found herself ushered into. It was not unlike that one at the Priory in its look of old-fashioned comfort and yet elegance. The pictures on the walls—for the most part portraits, painted so long ago that they had come to have the value of their period—added greatly to the picturesque effect of the room; and there were some fine water-colors and smaller works of art irregularly grouped, while the colors of the room were for the most part rich and dark, though in no degree sombre. Later in the season a pink awning would stretch above that flowered balcony, which made such a charming background for the room; but as it was, all the sunshine of the morning was allowed to drift in and dispel all idea of shadow, and the old lady, with her



HE DID NOT UNDERSTAND THE LOOK OF AMUSEMENT THAT LIGHTED UP LADY
MARCHMONT'S FACE.

keen, bright face and alert movements, was by no means the least attractive feature in the picture.

"My dear," she cried, taking Gladys's hands in both of hers, "how glad I am to see you! There," she added, slipping the ring back upon the girl's finger, "that was a very pretty way of overcoming Gott's scruples. Now sit down and tell me all about yourself."

She drew her little visitor over to a small sofa, and Gladys made haste to pour forth the story of Arthur Beresford's illness, and the pitiable condition she had found him in. Lady Marchmont listened in silence, though not a word escaped her, and before Gladys had finished her recital her quick mind had come to a decision.

"We will go to them at once," she said, laying her hand upon the bell near the chimney-piece. While she gave an order for her carriage to be brought around at once, Gladys was resolving in her mind how she could contrive to stay with Winifred for a day or two.

"Lady Marchmont," she said, anxiously, "I have such a favor to ask of you. I wish—oh, I wish with all my heart—to stay a little longer in London, so as to be near poor Winifred; but how can I manage it? As I told you, the friends I am with are going, perhaps to-night—certainly to-morrow morning—to France, and they are very anxious to send me off at once to Devonshire."

"My dear," said the old lady, smiling, "I promised that you should not apply to your Fairy Godmother in vain. You shall stay, and Miss Dymond shall not interfere with it,

for you can be my guest a few days longer. I will write her by the next post. Meanwhile we must send your maid back to the Langham with a message to your friends, for I want you to be with me the next hour or two."

Gladys could only look her thanks, but Lady Marchmont understood very well what was going on in her mind. While she went away to put on her things Gladys had a brief confab with Jarvis, who was almost as delighted as her little mistress with the turn things had taken. She had always been one of those who "favored" the Beresfords, and moreover she was so fond of Gladys that she was ready to do anything which would secure her a respite from the dull routine and unsympathetic influences of the Manor-house. She nodded her head a great many times with a shrewdly sagacious expression, while Gladys instructed her to explain matters at the Langham, and then return to Mickleham Square. Lady Marchmont, coming back just at this moment, added a polite message from herself, saying that she would do herself the pleasure of calling on Mrs. Hildreth a little later.

"Now, my dear," said Lady Marchmont, when they were seated in her luxurious little brougham, "I think we had better drive first to the doctor's. I think I am sure of his address, for he visits a hospital I am interested in."

Doctor Williams had his lodgings and office in a very unpretentious neighborhood close to Mickleham Square, and the street was thrown into a ferment of excitement by the approach of Lady Marchmont's carriage, and the descent of a footman in livery, who woke the echoes of the neighborhood

by his knock upon the doctor's door, and the young man himself, seated in his cheerless little office, was startled and fluttered by the grandeur of his unknown visitors. Very soon, however, he and Lady Marchmont had plunged into details of the case to which the young doctor had done as much justice as though Arthur Beresford, fighting for life with poverty, had been himself the heir to the colonel's money. Gladys, sitting by, feverish with excitement, and yet silenced by all the technicalities in the talk going on beside her, was gratified to hear the words "trained nurse" and "consultation," "a new bed," etc., so that during the moments of waiting she pictured innumerable comforts for both Arthur and his sister, and conjured up a great deal of activity for herself and Jarvis, who of course would remain with her in London. And then a thought crossed her mind of the household Frank Bruce had described in such unpromising terms. What would the proud and gloomy father say to all of this? But Gladys smiled. He need not know of it until Arthur was out of danger. Never had a consciousness of what money could do been so gratifying to her, although her first uses of the power it gave were so directly at variance with what she had been told her great-uncle planned.

But the next words from the doctor sent a chill to her heart. What if all the care they could lavish upon him came too late?

"It is a very dangerous case," Doctor Williams was saying, "and I shall only be too delighted to have the consulta-

tion you speak of, Lady Marchmont. In fact, that was one of my principal reasons for desiring his removal to the hospital. The crisis of the fever has not yet come, and we cannot speak with any real hope until that is over; but now that you have taken it in hand, I must say I feel some encouragement. That young girl, his sister, I can assure you, is one in ten thousand."

Gladys was delighted to hear this praise of Winifred, and as they drove away from the doctor's door she looked at Lady Marchmont with smiling eyes.

"Was I not right," she exclaimed, "when I felt so attracted to these cousins of mine? But oh, Lady Marchmont, what shall we do if he dies?"

"My dear," said the old lady, reverently, "he is in higher hands than ours. It was God's providence that sent you there this morning, and I think we can trust to the same gentle leading, even if what seems now such a calamity should befall that poor family. I don't like to make a young person like yourself," she added, looking at Gladys with eyes that had a moisture in them, "take a gloomy view of things; but after all, my dear, I am not sure that God does not show His tenderness by taking a young soul to the other life. You see, I have lived long enough to know that beautiful as the world really is, the full threescore-and-ten must contain many a heartache and disappointment, and sometimes what I call God's 'waiting time' seems to me the hardest part of all."

But, as Lady Marchmont had inferred, Gladys was too

young not to feel a sense of bitterness in the thought that Arthur Beresford, young, talented, and full of promise, might be dying. She sank back into her corner of the carriage, trying very hard not to cry again, and yet what a tragedy it seemed to her was going on in that darkened room in Mickleham Square, while the sunshine and bravery of the spring-time was asserting itself everywhere about them. Was he, like young Sir Guy, to fight but one battle, and then close his eyes and drop his sword forever? Gladys's thoughts rushed to the Priory, to the drawing-room dominated by the painted presence of the young follower of the chevalier. Oh, if only Arthur could be saved, what happy days they might all have there! But her hopes, her suppressed sobs, at last merged themselves into a silent prayer. It was only a little simple petition, but could not the Master, whose sweetest injunction had been "Love ye one another," hear it, although spoken in the dimmest recesses of the young girl's heart?

CHAPTER XXXVII.

MRS. BROWN IS IMPRESSED.

WINIFRED'S humiliations, her anxiety for the daily needs of life in Arthur's sick-room, were at an end. Mrs. Brown had rushed up-stairs as soon as Gladys departed to offer all manner of services ; and when Jarvis appeared, somewhat in advance of Lady Marchmont, with respectful suggestions for the young girl's comfort, Winnie realized that some of the miseries of the ordeal she had been passing through were over. Then there was the flutter of Lady Marchmont's arrival, which even the quiet necessary in a sick-room could not wholly subdue. Mrs. Brown and her daughters and the open-mouthed Susan were thrown into a state of excitement such as they had never known before by the mere fact of the liveried carriage at the door and the necessity of addressing a lady of title. When her ladyship said, "Is your first floor engaged?" Mrs. Brown felt as though she could go down upon her knees in humble thanksgiving, for only that morning had she remarked to Brown himself that she was shaking in her bones for fear the drawing-room floor would stand idle all the season. And now it *appeared that* her formerly despised lodgers were to occupy

it! Mrs. Brown flung open the door-way of a large room, furnished in the conventional green reps, and with yards of stiff Nottingham lace in the windows, and pushed open folding-doors to show how "andy the bedroom and dressing-room adjoining would be for the poor young gentleman." Then it ensued that a second good-sized bedroom would be required on the floor above, and Mrs. Brown was struck dumb by the liberal terms promptly arranged by Lady Marchmont.

"I want every comfort and privilege to be insured," the little old lady said, standing amid the dingy splendors of Mrs. Brown's drawing-room, and inwardly resolving that it should be more habitable ere long, "so we will fix upon a sum, if you please, my good woman, to include everything. I have engaged two professional nurses, who will relieve each other, and my young cousin's maid will probably be back and forth, and she herself will often be here, so I think we had better arrange for both these floors, as you say they happen to be vacant."

"The merest chance, your ladyship," cried Mrs. Brown, who was almost afraid the palpitations of her heart would be visible underneath the plaid of her best gown. But Lady Marchmont was not interested in the landlady's emotions. She had planned for Arthur's careful removal to the floor below, and had despatched Jarvis to her own house for the necessary bed-linen. She was to see one of the nurses in Park Lane at one o'clock, and so Gladys was left to superintend the arrangement of the new room—an office the young girl gladly took upon herself. She was pleased to help

Jarvis make up the bed with the fragrant lavender-scented sheets, and very soon an air of home-like comfort was infused into the room, a fresh white cloth being laid upon a small table in the dressing-room, to which all the bottles from the room up-stairs were carried; some of Arthur's special belongings which his keen eye might miss were carried down, and before the arrival of the doctor and the nurse, who were to superintend his removal, a decided transformation had taken place.

Jarvis had come back from the Langham with a surprise for her young mistress. The Hildreths, alarmed by the possibility of infection, had taken the first train to Folkestone, leaving innumerable messages of affection for Gladys, and a letter containing a warning injunction to their young friend to return at once to Barnford. It would be easy enough to go back to the Langham and pack up her belongings, and Gladys was pleased to be relieved from the burden of farewells, which she had dreaded, knowing they would be full of expressions of disapproval of herself.

Winifred could scarcely realize what had taken place. Leaving Jarvis in charge of her brother a few minutes, she stole down the staircase and looked in upon the rooms to which Gladys was putting the finishing touches. Not alone was her heart thrilled by the sight of so many comforts in preparation for her brother, but the vision of Gladys's figure flying about, duster in hand, the skirts of her pretty gown pinned back, and a look of anxious interest on her face, gave the poor tired little sister a sense that she had

found not only a ministering angel, but a friend. She had come in by the drawing-room door, and stood still a moment or two before Gladys perceived her, and then the latter darted forward, saying, joyfully,

"Oh, Winifred, I feel as if he *must* get well, and I want to tell you something Lady Marchmont told me."

The girls stood together at the fireside, and Gladys continued: "She said that for a long time she had wanted to break down the barrier between your family and all the others, and now it seemed as though Providence meant to bring it about through this illness of poor Arthur's, for you know that your father cannot possibly object to anything that is done to save his life, and it may be the means of mending matters all around. I don't know," said Gladys, with rising color, "what was the cause of the break between your father and Colonel Dymond, but Lady Marchmont says that Captain Paget will explain it to me, and she is very sure that it arose in a misunderstanding."

Winifred lifted her eyes, full of gratitude and sympathy, to her cousin's face, but she answered, sorrowfully,

"I am not going to interfere with any of the things you are all good enough to do for Arthur, but you must not expect papa to be reasonable about it. He cannot forget his sense of injury."

But Gladys, holding her cousin's hand, looked at her with eyes that refused to be shadowed by Winifred's despair.

"We shall see," she said, earnestly. "I for one shall not give up hope."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

IN PARK LANE.

G LADYS remained with Winifred until five o'clock that afternoon, and had the satisfaction of seeing the invalid made as comfortable as possible in the fresh bedroom, while Doctor Williams paid a second visit, and the night nurse was duly installed. A room for Winifred on the second floor was prepared, and every attention possible was suggested by Mrs. Brown. Straw had been strewn in front of the house, and altogether it was with a sense of deep relief, and a feeling that she had a right to enjoy the evening with Lady Marchmont, that my little heroine found herself again in the brougham from Park Lane, whirling away through the soft spring twilight to Lady Marchmont's charming little home.

Jarvis had settled everything at the Langham, and when Gladys was ushered into a beautiful bedroom near to her ladyship's, she found that her faithful attendant had laid out the dress of black and white striped silk, with its frills of pretty lace, the purchase of which Jarvis had suggested. In all her life Gladys had never dreamed of anything half so delightful as this room, with its innumerable comforts; and the sense



LYING BACK AMONG THE PILLOWS, GLADYS FELT ASLEEP.

of quiet, thoughtful service was very grateful to the young girl, who was tired enough, after the excitements and actual work of the day, to be glad to follow Jarvis's suggestion that she should lie down an hour before dinner. A wide chintz-covered sofa was drawn out in the cosy little dressing-room, just near enough to the fire that burned brightly in a tiny grate, and Gladys, lying back among the capacious down pillows, closed her eyes and fell asleep, soothed by the distant murmur from the streets and the tick of a little French clock upon the mantle. She was awakened by a touch from Lady Marchmont's hand, and looked up to find her hostess, dressed for dinner, regarding her with an expression which, if a trifle sad, was full of affection.

"My dear," said the old lady, tenderly, "I have written to Barnford that you must stay with me for a fortnight, and I want you to feel at home and fall into the ways of the household. Who knows what Arthur Paget may do when he returns?"

The suggestion was enough for Gladys. She dressed for dinner full of the idea that perhaps her time with Miss Dymond was really served; and as she descended the stairs and joined Lady Marchmont in the drawing-room, she tried to believe it possible that this might be a temporary home, and the evening which followed strengthened her desire that it should be so. They dined alone in a large room at the back of the house overlooking a garden, and the talk was that of intimate friends, bits of confidence being given and returned, which made the young girl feel as though she had known her

hostess all her life. She had found out before they left the table that her ladyship was almost alone in the world, Mr. Tom down in Devonshire and Captain Paget out in Afghanistan being her nearest relations. Also that she spent six months in every year in Park Lane, and divided the rest of her time between the country and a visit to the Continent.

"How delightful!" Gladys exclaimed, looking across the table at her Fairy Godmother, and almost envying her the freedom and activity of her life.

"Do you think so?" said Lady Marchmont, smiling absently. "My dear, I begin to think it might be pleasant if I could see a young life growing up at my side, and could help to form and make it happy. I think I see what you would like to say in that telltale face of yours. Why have I lived alone so long a time if that is the case? Well, you see I once tried the experiment of having some young people with me, but I found out that all the impecunious members of their families were building on my death, and it rather put a damper on my plans. Of course my nephews Tom and Arthur were different. All they could ever want was my hospitality, and the fact that I was an old aunt to whom they could come and grumble or be foolish whenever they liked. And they have been true to me," she added, proudly; "I have never yet had reason to be ashamed of them."

Anything about her guardian was sure to have an interest for Gladys, but Lady Marchmont did not renew the subject even when they were alone in the drawing-room, and were talking over Gladys's possible future. As the time ap-

proached for Captain Paget's arrival in England the young girl felt eager to know a great many things about him. Even his personal appearance seemed of consequence, and but for her desire to keep the story of the ten thousand pounds to herself, she would have told Lady Marchmont of Sarah Beresford's description of the gallant young swell of whom the savages need not be afraid. But instead of this, the conversation included many topics which were new to the colonel's heiress.

"I suppose," said Lady Marchmont, "that I am to a great degree responsible for your fortune. I will leave Captain Paget to tell you what he thinks best of the trouble with the Beresfords, but I will say that I was surprised to find them entirely left out of the will. When I discovered that my cousin Ralph Dymond meant to leave the bulk of his property to public institutions, most of which had some eccentric charity for their object, I reminded him of my old comrade and cousin, Gladys Dymond, and the interest he had taken in you. So I believe I was the only person not completely taken by surprise."

"Did he say much about what he expected me to do?" asked Gladys, earnestly.

Lady Marchmont did not answer for a moment. She remained thoughtfully looking down into the fire, and then said, speaking like a person who is trying to recall faint impressions of the past, "He did talk about it all; but never dreaming the end was so near at hand, I paid very little attention to what he said. I know he had certain ideas about

how you were to be restricted, and how left free, and he gave Arthur Paget a letter of instructions—a kind of secret trust.”

Gladys, who was on a footstool near to her hostess, leaned her cheek against her hand, and also gazed absently into the depths of the fire. The idea of this special letter filled her with a vague uneasiness. Her determinations to befriend the Beresfords and keep to the word she had pledged Sarah were not shaken, and yet she began to see the possibility of trouble growing out of it. All, however, must soon be settled, for Captain Paget's return was fixed for the middle of April at the latest, and of course he must know at once all that she had done or intended doing; and although she resolved to do her very utmost for Arthur and Winifred Beresford, a certain dread of what the secret letter might contain would prevent her now from making any promises which she might be forced, perhaps by lack of means, to break.

How different was this delightful evening with Lady Marchmont from the dreary ones spent in the Manor-house! Before parting for the night, Lady Marchmont promised that Gladys should be sent with Jarvis to Mickleham Square the very first thing in the morning, and Gladys laid her head upon her pillow with a sense of unspeakable comfort in the thought of Winifred's altered surroundings. Surely if love and tenderness and care could bring Arthur back to life, he would soon be his old self once again. And Gladys resolved to do all she could for the happy accomplishment

of this end. What she would have felt that night could she have known that Captain Paget, already on his way from Afghanistan, was destined to a strange encounter with the Hildreths in Venice, I am not prepared to say, but I fear her slumber even in that most hospitable mansion would not have been so peaceful, nor her first waking thought a happy one.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

CONVALESCENCE.

THE day marked by the doctors as the decisive one for Arthur's case had come and gone. The crisis was over; but now, as the grave physician whom Doctor Williams had called in consultation said, everything depended upon his care during the next fortnight. Two weeks had already elapsed since the day of Gladys Ferrol's first visit, and Janey Beresford had come up to London to take Winifred's place until their mother could leave home. Winifred was to explain matters as far as she could to the father, whose gloom over everything Janey described as something almost tragical; but Gladys had insisted upon Winifred's returning laden with things for her mother's comfort, and she had written Mrs. Cleve to order anything she liked from the young girl under the same arrangement they had previously made, whereby the work was supposed to be for an elderly lady in Torquay who had a passion for the most expensive designs in crewel-work and silk embroidery.

After the first days of anxiety were at an end, and Arthur was pronounced decidedly convalescent, there was a period of actual enjoyment for all the young people. The

invalid was soon able to be moved into the drawing-room every day, where Janey and Gladys took turns in reading aloud or ministering to his comfort in every way their feminine and sisterly hearts could suggest.

Gladys never had a brother, and during these days of peaceful close companionship with her hero she came to regard him in the same light as did Janey; and Arthur himself declared that one of the most delightful experiences of coming back to life was the discovery that he possessed a new sister.

Lady Marchmont was supposed by the lad to be accountable for most of the material advantages he enjoyed, and by a carefully devised plan he was made to believe that Fuller had advanced a large sum on the famous picture, which he was to finish only after a long rest. But while he thoroughly appreciated his elder cousin's kindness, it was to Gladys Ferrol, the girl whose very existence had once been hateful to him, that he looked for the hours which were the brightest ones in his convalescence. Her light footstep on the staircase and along the corridors, her face always bright and pleasant to look upon, her voice so soft and yet cheerful, were watched for by the invalid with an impatience which might have made active Janey jealous but that she so heartily shared it.

While Gladys was absent, the brother and sister often discussed her talking of the Priory, with a feeling of pride in the fact that this American cousin was to reign there one day; and Janey found her brother a most patient and

interested listener now for the account of that eventful day in September which had seemed, a few weeks previous, so tiresome to him. When he was inclined to be tyrannical and exacting the girls became his most abject slaves, taking a peculiar pleasure in doing his slightest bidding; and if, in years to come, Gladys Ferrol was the one to whom Arthur turned for counsel and sympathy and interest in his work, it was, I am very sure, because during that one spring-time of their young lives, when all active faculties were suspended, she had learned to understand and appreciate the subtle workings of his mind and heart. The trio talked, it often seemed to Gladys, of every topic under the sun, but yet there were certain subjects reserved, though with no understanding that it should be so, for the time she and her cousin were alone—twilight hours of mutual confidence or discussion in which Arthur let the reins of his artistic imagination loose, and initiated Gladys into all the mysteries he had penetrated of the art for which his instinct amounted to something very near to genius. Learning from him, she found herself fascinated by the stories of lives which he had pored over in books, or through records they had left in poetry or pictures.

Needless to say that young Beresford was full of the sort of ardor which had created such a flame in England during the early days of pre-Raphaelitism; and if he had had the advantages of coming in upon a period where the crudities of the first disciples of men like Ruskin and Rossetti had been smoothed away, he was no less an ardent believer

in the gospel of truth in form and color. He held up to Gladys's untrained mind the works of men as widely apart as Cotman and Frederick Walker, and yet who were as actual living influences to the young man, whose enthusiastic spirit had found its boundaries in real life so cramped and confined.

All that was fine and high-strung in Gladys Ferrol's mind caught at these suggestions of lives which Arthur assured her had the elements of heroism in their very essentials, and the world of art seemed to open before her in a way which perhaps might never have been the case had she known only the splendors of Morpeth Lodge and the somewhat stately conditions of Mr. Bruce's studio. The strength and sweetness of the Devonshire country, to which she was glad now that Arthur belonged, seemed to unfold itself before her young mind under the spell of the lad's eloquence. Even his fragmentary utterances had their charm. Gradually she absorbed the meanings in his ambition which had seemed at first beyond her comprehension. The dry technicalities of art fascinated her, and she no longer regarded pictures, as Arthur once assured her, from a merely decorative point of view. She felt almost solemn when they talked of the Academy Exhibition, and Arthur, who had introduced her by name to all the famous artists of the day, hoped that he would be allowed to visit Burlington House with her in May.

"In May?" said Gladys, on this occasion a note of something regretful in her voice.

Arthur, as usual, was leaning back in his easy-chair, while

Janey was sewing in the window, and Gladys was in her favorite position — an idle one — on the hearth-rug. She lifted her eyes sadly to the boy's face. "How can I tell what my guardian will do with me then?" she continued. "But, Arthur, nothing in the world will ever make me care less about you all. I am so glad you think there are things worth more than money in this life! As you say, art may have its struggles, but it certainly can create a life for any one who cares about it."

Janey listened, thrilled with admiration at Gladys's appreciation of Arthur's wisdom, and naturally enough the invalid, who had been leading her upward, was pleased. Janey had to go away on some errand for a moment, and Arthur spoke quickly and earnestly.

"Don't forget this, Gladys," he said, "and remember that when I talk about its being so well worth while, it is because I really feel that to work well as an artist means to always work upward. Do you suppose a man like Frederick Walker had mean thoughts while he was doing that picture with the figures in a boat that I was telling you about the other day? Or Millet—what do you suppose he was thinking of when he painted the 'Angelus'? I'm not saying that good artists are necessarily saints, but I mean that their best work — the subjects that are worthy of them — gives them thoughts that one can't talk about very well, but which they *must* feel and understand. I'd like never to paint a picture that I couldn't look at always, and feel there was nothing to be ashamed of in my life while I was painting it."

"Yes," said Gladys. They were silent for a few moments, and then she said, a little timidly, "Some of these days, Arthur, I wish you would make a picture for me down at the Priory."

He smiled. The great charm of Arthur Beresford's face was inherited from his mother, and lay in the smile that often came in moments of his deepest reflection. It dispelled the composure of lips and eyes, and yet disturbed nothing of their intensity, but if his mood were one in which solemn feelings had a part, rather betrayed to those who knew him that this was the case.

"What should it be, Gladys?" he said, moving his head slightly, so that the girl's face in the twilight with its soft outline was clearer to him.

"A green picture," said Gladys, a little smile flitting about her lips. "I have it all in my mind, and when I shut my eyes I can see it perfectly. It is near the stream, and there are some pollards, and the sky must be gray and blue—a windy sky, I think," said Gladys, confidentially.

"We will paint it," answered Arthur. "It shall be our own special picture."

The girl laughed gleefully, and Arthur, leaning back in his chair a moment, remained silent.

"How would this do, Gladys?" he said, presently, stretching out his hand for one of the books which she had brought him a day or two before. He handed her the little volume, and as he did so he indicated the verse which he desired her to read :

“Fair without a cloud,
Yet windless, so that a gray haze did shroud
The bright blue; neither burning overmuch,
Nor chill—the blood of those old folk to touch
With fretful, restless memory of despair.
Withal no promise of the fruitful year
Seemed unfulfilled in that fair autumn-tide.”

“I like it,” said Gladys, nodding above the margin of the page. “Perhaps we shall find something we like better. But you won’t forget?”

“I shall never see a pollard or a windless sky without remembering it.”

If these pleasant hours in which the young people forgot all the differences which the colonel’s money had made between them had to come to an end, there was for Gladys always the delight of a return to Park Lane, and she had contrived to tell Lady Marchmont enough of her knowledge of the Beresfords to make the old lady proud of her young cousins. On this evening her ladyship came herself for Gladys, and if there was noticeable a certain abstraction in her manner, nothing could have been kinder than her way of talking to the young girl as they drove home in the early dusk. As on the first evening of her stay in Park Lane, the talk turned upon Captain Paget, and Lady Marchmont said at last, and with an evident effort,

“I may as well tell you, my love, that I had a letter from Arthur Paget this afternoon, and we may expect him any day. He has met those American friends of yours in Ven-

ice, and it seems that they have made him very angry with some of their stupid tales. I ought to tell you that Arthur has a temper of his own, and when you meet him you must be as careful as you can in what you do or say."

Gladys was always respectful in her manner towards dear old Lady Marchmont, and there was no lack of proper feeling in the way she said now, drawing herself up proudly,

"I will only tell him the simple truth. As for his temper, I hope, dear Lady Marchmont, I shall not rouse it, but if I should"—she smiled a little quizzically—"I shall just go away until he feels better about it."

CHAPTER XL.

CAPTAIN PAGET.

ONE bright spring morning, during the temporary absence of Mr. Gott, who was on duty for Lady Marchmont in a distant part of the city, the little green door in Park Lane was opened by a new footman to admit a distinguished-looking gentleman with a bronzed face and soldierly bearing, who inquired for her ladyship with an eager air of interest. On hearing that she was out, the gentleman's face fell; but a moment later a peal of laughter from the drawing-room above—a girlish laugh, light-hearted and sweet—was wafted down to the stranger, who looked up with an inquiry as to whence it came.

The footman, wondering who the gentleman might be, answered, politely,

“Miss Ferrol is in the drawing-room, sir, with young Mr. and Miss Beresford. Will you go up, sir?”

“In a moment,” said the stranger; “but you need not announce me, or say that I am here. I am Lady Marchmont's nephew,” he added—“Captain Paget.”

The man had heard the name often enough during the last few weeks to make him look at the new-comer with re-

spectful interest, but he had no idea why Gladys Ferrol's guardian preferred to present himself unannounced. The visitor knew the ways of the house, that was one thing certain, the man thought, as the captain pushed open the door of the luxurious little morning-room and went in, dismissing the servant with a quick gesture of his hand. It was just as well to be by himself for a few moments, for the wrath which the captain had been trying all the way from Paris to subdue, hoping that he had been misinformed on certain subjects, now rose to an indignant and, as he considered, justifiable height. Then it was all true—all that these American friends of his ward's whom he had run across by chance had told him! The girl had no more discrimination than to make friends with those—to him—offensive people whom he characterized as the "John Beresfords!"

Well did he remember the last impression produced upon himself and upon Colonel Dymond by the gushing Sarah and Algy, who knew so much about the inhabitants of Piccadilly. In the first moments of his supreme annoyance and disgust the captain did not ask himself how all this had come about, nor what remarkable revolution in his aunt Anabella's frame of mind must have taken place before the Beresfords should have been admitted on these friendly, cheerful terms of intimacy—invading those mysterious morning hours of hers, filling her drawing-room with their laughter—the result, no doubt, of cockney jokes—and of course taking for granted that they were all that was acceptable and interesting. And he had left her, as it seemed, to her

own selection of associates for six whole months, and the captain's mind easily suggested the idea of a vulgar or, as he put it, "bouncing" American girl, who was no doubt at this moment sitting with her arm encircling Sarah's waist, while Algy was perhaps giving them a little light comedy.

The captain, still severe and stern in his disgust, went out as far as the foot of the staircase, and then hesitated a moment, an impulse to walk away—to go down to Mr. Melrose's office and see what arrangement might be made whereby he could consign the girl at once into other hands—preventing him from mounting the staircase at once. And then there floated down to him the sound of quick, sweet voices, and he distinguished some curious words which for an instant were not familiar to his ears—"Brer' Coon," "Brer' Fox," "Brer' Rabbit." Could it be possible, the captain asked himself, with a momentary relaxation of the muscles under his dark mustache, that they were reading "Uncle Remus!" And then the gay note of laughter which had reached him first sounded again. "I positively *cannot* go on," said a girl's voice. And some one answered—manly tones these were—"Have you a brier in your hand, like 'Brer' Rabbit?"

"I think it's in my side," said the other. "Oh dear! I've laughed myself tired."

There was a brief silence, during which the captain softly mounted the staircase. An anteroom, long and half concealed by curtains, led from the drawing-room, and this Captain Paget entered, unheard and unseen, by a lower door

He would look at the group, he told himself, just long enough to have an impression of his ward; for of course it would be easy to distinguish her from the blooming Sarah.

With a rush of feeling which the objects always so dear to him in the familiar drawing-room brought, the captain took in first an impression that nothing had been changed, and then he drew a quick breath, surprised enough by the unexpectedness of the sight presented to him. A handsome lad of eighteen or thereabouts, with a face in which the aristocratic outlines of the Montescues were strengthened by a look which belonged wholly to himself, was lying on the sofa, and near him, bending her pretty, smooth fair head above a piece of delicate embroidery, sat a girl whose type was of the sweetest Saxon. But the third member of this harmonious party—the girl who, seated on a wide low ottoman, had been reading from the book open on her knee—riveted the captain's attention, and suddenly changed all the current of his thoughts.

Gladys had stopped for a moment, and had lifted her face so that its profile, clearly outlined against the dark green of the wall, presented to the captain as fair a picture of girlish loveliness as he had ever seen. Actual beauty, perhaps, there was not, but something inexpressibly charming gave the young face its attraction, and that mingling of gentleness and pride, of soft appealing womanliness and yet character, which had taken hold of Lady Marchmont's fancy on first meeting her young kinswoman, appealed to the busy man of the world, who stood apart gazing unseen at the pretty, home-

like picture, whose lights and shadows were all those of happy, light-hearted youth. Against the background of the flower-laden balcony Gladys's little young figure, in its dress of pale gray cassimere, with knots of black ribbon here and there, and soft lace falling about her neck and wrists, made a charming effect; and perhaps it was as well that her guardian's first impressions of the girl should have been formed when she was all unconscious of his presence and at such a happy moment, for this was Arthur's first visit to the drawing-room in Park Lane, and the book from which Gladys had been reading was one which the trio reserved for special periods of enjoyment.

"Do go on," came from the invalid on the sofa. "What are you thinking about, Gladys?"

"That my hour of doom is approaching," she answered, turning her eyes towards her cousin. "In two hours at the latest Captain Paget will be here. Oh dear! whatever shall I find to say to him! I'm so glad I have been reading something about Afghanistan, for I should certainly have mixed it all up with Cetewayo if I hadn't; and for the life of me I can't forget Sarah Beresford's description of him."

An involuntary ha! ha! from the sofa was followed by Arthur's saying, "Just wait till you see him! She called him a stuck-up swell, didn't she?"

Gladys laughed, and clasping her hands about her knees, nodded her head to her companion, recalling Sarah's description, which never failed to amuse them all since she had repeated it.



“WELL, THIS IS BECOMING DECIDEDLY INTERESTING,” THOUGHT THE CAPTAIN.

"Yes, and she said the savages needn't be afraid of him and his little gun. Oh, dear," added Gladys, "it's not his little gun I'm afraid of, but his little eye that may beam on me, and his little hand that may gently lead me down to Dicksie Dymond again. Imagine me, if you please, meekly going forth, after all the lovely times we have had together! I can't help feeling amused when Barbara Bruce looks at me so anxiously. Will he be *very* dreadful, I wonder?"

"Well, this is becoming decidedly interesting," thought the captain, from his position in the anteroom. So Sarah Beresford had undertaken to present his ward with that cheerful picture of him, had she? "By Jove!" said the captain to himself, "these young people have been getting decidedly ahead of me. My little gun, indeed!" He continued his reflections, smiling in spite of himself, and yet vexed to be thus criticised even by so unimportant a person as Mrs. John's daughter. But as he moved away, still unseen and unheard, out into the hall, he realized the fact that it would be wiser not to make his appearance just then. He understood now that the Beresfords with Gladys were those (personally) unobjectionable ones from Little Barnford, but it was all a mystery to her guardian how this intimacy had been brought about, and on what occasion he had been the victim of Miss Sarah's descriptive powers. Where was the family feud which had lasted all his lifetime between Miss Dymond and the people at the Tor House? And even Lady Marchmont had not been on friendly terms with his cousin Ralph's family for some time. Could it be that this spirited,

although gentle-eyed young girl, whose figure in the gray dress made such a charming centre of attraction in the picture presented to him a few moments before, had by some subtle means produced this revolution in the condition of things? and if so, what was to be done about it?

The captain went down the staircase and into the morning-room again, where he sat down to think matters over and decide what he had better do. The Hildreths, of course, had told him the story of the ten thousand pounds. Mollie had given him a highly colored picture of their visit to Alexandra Villa, but how Gladys became acquainted with these cousins he was not prepared to say, and she was too confused in her impressions of the other Beresfords to be able to venture upon any statement concerning them, and moreover neither she nor her mother cared to admit that they had left Gladys so abruptly. But what they had said had been enough to startle the captain into a decision to return to England at once, cutting short the visit in Paris among a charming circle of friends there, to his great annoyance and disgust. He began to regret now various conditions with which his guardianship of the colonel's heiress had been weighted. "What could he do," he asked himself, "if this girl with those proud lips and steadfast eyes insisted upon carrying out her own ideas?"

Then came the sounds of movement among the little party overhead. One of Lady Marchmont's carriages had drawn up before the door. It was evident that Arthur and Janey were going out. The invalid was made very comfortable

in one corner of the carriage, and the captain had an opportunity of again watching Gladys unseen, while she stood in the sunshine of the morning, uttering something affectionate and friendly, no doubt, and then turned to wave her hand in farewells to these privileged companions. Her guardian waited until the young girl came back, and her light foot-fall was heard going up the staircase and into the drawing-room again. Then he touched the bell, smiling to himself.

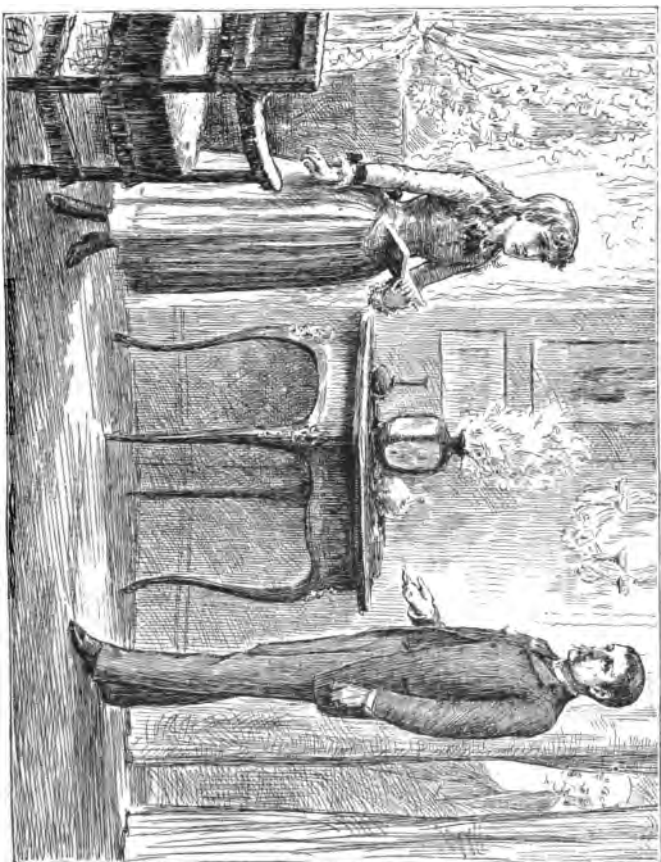
"You may announce me to Miss Ferrol," he said, looking at the footman with a gleam of amusement which he found it impossible to conceal. "I believe she is in the drawing-room."

And he followed the servant up the stairs, not in the least knowing how he had best begin the interview in which he well knew he ought to assert himself the master as well as guide of her actions.

CHAPTER XLI.

THE GUARDIAN.

"CAPTAIN PAGET!" The name startled Gladys, who was standing in the window, and she turned a look almost of dismay upon the stranger who followed closely on the announcement of his name. He had come—the guardian to whose arrival she had looked forward with such hope and yet at times with such despair. The six months which had just passed in her life seemed like a dream from which she had suddenly awakened as she found herself confronting a fine-looking, soldierly man, who seemed old to her, and yet was in reality very little over thirty years of age—a man by no means justifying Sarah's pert description, and yet with that unmistakable air of being able to enjoy leisure which no doubt was the touch above Algy's comprehension. Dark blue eyes, closely cropped brown hair, a complexion bronzed by out-of-door life, and a dark mustache shading, although scarcely concealing, a resolute mouth—these, with that mingled look of the soldier and the man of society, were all confused in Gladys's first impressions of her guardian; but when she found her hand in a kind and friendly grasp, and heard an easy, well-modulated voice saying, "So



GLADYS MEETS HER GUARDIAN.

this is my little ward, is it? Have I come sooner than you expected?" Gladys felt decidedly reassured, and although she was trembling from nervousness, she could afford to smile and answer in her natural voice,

"We expected you at two o'clock."

"But I came straight through from Dover," Arthur Paget answered, sitting down near the table, while Gladys resumed her former place upon the ottoman, "and I am very glad," he continued, "to have a little chat with you alone. You must have so much to tell me."

Gladys's lips formed a half articulate "Yes," and she tried to look her guardian steadily in the face. Sitting opposite her at the table in an easy attitude, and with his own eyes fixed upon her, she thought him decidedly pleasant in manner and expression; but his tone conveyed a hint of deeper meaning, and with a passionate desire that from the first there should be no concealments, she said, hurriedly,

"Yes, I wish—that is, I mean to tell you everything. You are the one who has a right to know." And she added, with a little quiver of her lips, though she tried to smile, "I shall be very sorry if I make you angry."

"And so shall I," said Captain Paget, composedly, but with that suspicion of a smile lurking about the corners of his mustache which perhaps gave him the superior look Algy had objected to; "for you would have to have done something very bad indeed to make that possible. Perhaps I ought to tell you at once that your friends the Hildreths told me of your somewhat impulsive generosity."

"Oh!" cried Gladys; "the ten thousand pounds, you mean?"

The captain smiled. "Yes," he said, "that was it, exactly; but of course you need not worry over that, as, owing to your being a minor, the promise is worth just nothing at all."

"What do you mean?" cried Gladys, starting forward; "that I am to tell a—falsehood just because I am fifteen instead of eighteen? Ah!" she added, looking at her guardian sorrowfully, "I had begun, from what they said, to be afraid you might be like that."

"Like what?" said the captain, decidedly nettled. "I suppose you would have me infer that you consider it dishonorable; but, my dear child, I am afraid you will find that older minds have to decide these questions for you, and I hardly think that John Beresford is so delicate a man of honor that you need consider his feelings."

The color ebbed away from the soft girlish face before him. "I am thinking of my own honor," said Gladys, quietly.

There was dead silence for just a moment, and then the captain did what was no doubt, under the circumstances, the wisest thing to do. He must not acknowledge himself defeated, nor had he the least idea of allowing this child to carry her point; but it might be better, thought the shrewd soldier, to turn the subject.

"We'll discuss this another time," he said, good-humoredly. "Now tell me, if you will, something of yourself. To

begin with, how did you make the acquaintance of the Beresfords?"

Gladys sketched rapidly the story of her knowledge of them, all unconscious that in doing so she betrayed to her guardian the entire simplicity and unselfishness of her own motives, the lack of anything that could have been small in her point of view. "A generous nature, that is clear," he was saying to himself, while, leaning his folded arms on the table, he watched her and listened critically. Question after question followed, and Gladys had not the least idea that the shrewd man of the world who, six months ago, had planned a successful battle, was putting her through this apparently simple interrogatory more for the purpose of discovering something of her nature than because he cared specially to know about the people or things they were discussing. Barnford, the Manor-house, old Miss Dymond, the Bruces, the Beresfords, the fascinating hour at the Priory, something of her own thoughts concerning herself—all these passed in review before the guardian who had been afraid that his absence had produced a catastrophe, and the story at least of the last six months of her life was amply outlined.

Before an hour had passed Captain Paget felt as though he and Gladys had at least established a foundation of confidence upon which he could work in the future. And the girl herself, clear-eyed, frank of speech, and earnest although subdued in manner, pleased him. The faults apparent to him—and he was determined to be severely critical—were really the result of fine traits, and only such as needed

time to rectify, and her entire unconsciousness of herself was refreshing in the extreme. He did not doubt her developing into a brilliant if not actually beautiful woman, and who could say but that the young face, with its pleasant charm, would not one day wake into a more decided power of attractiveness, and Captain Paget began to feel impressed by his responsibilities in a way he had not thought of. He had expected something so different—a crude, unformed, angular girl, whose pronunciation would be the first thing to correct, and whose idea of her own importance might be vulgarly obtrusive; but this tall girl sitting opposite him, and talking, with now and then a smile or sparkle of the eye, an appeal to his sympathy, or confidence, or sense of humor, which was very captivating, was every inch a lady; and heiress and mistress of the Priory though she might be, in her girlishness was all the charm of a happy child.

Naturally enough they came back to the question of the ten thousand pounds, and Gladys, who felt decidedly more at home with her guardian now, begged him not to think that anything would change her idea of right and wrong in the matter. "Perhaps it was a mistake," she said, unwillingly; "but at all events I knew when I did it that I was passing a solemn word, and I am very sure that nothing will prevent my keeping it."

Captain Paget made no answer to this, and Gladys continued:

"Can you not tell me why Colonel Dymond cast off these Beresfords? I mean those from Little Barnford."

She must know something of it some time, the captain reflected, and why not tell her now? The hour seemed one for revelations, and Gladys's bright, humorous way of sketching things and people, without a particle of malice, but only the charm of an observant mind, had interested him, and made him think her capable of understanding what he might have to tell.

"I hope," he said, "that you know too little of family feuds to understand how, long ago, old Miss Dymond had a grudge against Ralph Beresford for his marriage. He was living with the colonel then, and although until just before his death there was no open hostility, things never seemed to run quite smoothly. Ralph refused to study for the Church, which was the old colonel's first cause of displeasure, and then that persistent pride of his kept up the feeling when once it was started. Then there was a fuss with the Marchmonts. The whole thing, I believe, originated in money, which I am very certain was the colonel's real reason for willing his fortune to a complete outsider: there should be no more rankling and contention. But that he meant to do something for them I was also certain, and I will tell you this much: I know that he wrote a letter to Ralph Beresford not long before his death, and took it very hard that his nephew never came to see him after his request that he should do so. The great mistake was in bringing up so many people in both John Beresford's family and his brother's, with a sort of tacit understanding that they should have something at his death."

"Why are Mrs. John's family so different?" inquired Gladys.

Captain Paget laughed.

"Why, John was always the black sheep of the family, and he married an uneducated woman, who expected, poor thing, to be elevated by it, but of course she only brought misery upon herself. I wish I might wait longer now," said Gladys's guardian, and smiling brightly as he rose to leave; "but I will be back to dinner. I am due for lunch with some brother officers. Will you tell my dear aunt for me that she may expect me by four o'clock, or five at the latest?"

"And you will not forget," cried Gladys, "that you promised to be interested in Arthur and Janey?"

"In reason," he said, smiling, and laying his hand lightly on the girl's shoulder. "We must not dispute too much over our likes and dislikes just at first," he said, good-humoredly, and added, looking down into the young face lifted so earnestly to his, "I foresee that we shall often have to indulge in long combats, for we are both inclined to think our own way the best; but you must remember one thing, my dear, I have my duty to perform, and my own kind of responsibility for the next few years, and it is as much a matter of honor and principle with me to counsel you in the right way, and perhaps to interfere with your doing anything foolish, as you feel it is to keep even that silly promise to Sarah Beresford. Seriously, I shall try to make your life as easy and happy as possible, and humor you whenever

I can ; but on the other hand you must not rebel against my rightful authority. Let it be peace, and not war. Let us determine to be friends, not foes."

He held out his hand, and Gladys, with a ridiculous little feeling of opposition, laughed, and for just an instant put her hands behind her back.

"You must promise one thing first," she said, "and I truly mean it. No matter what you may think about America or Americans, or particularly about George Washington, you must never run them down to me, and must always let me think them the nicest."

Her guardian threw back his head, and laughed uncontrollably. "I suppose," he said, when his burst of merriment was over, "you have had a good dose of that sort of thing from Miss Dymond. Well, tyrant, in what terms am I to seal our compact? Am I to be allowed to express my views in a general way on any questions connected with America? You know I don't approve of you by the wholesale, and I'll try never to think of George Washington at all."

"But you will have to," cried Gladys, gayly, "because I made up my mind when Miss Dymond was so horrid that every twenty-second day of February I'd celebrate Washington's Birthday the best way I could."

"Then I'll agree to drink his health once a year, if that will keep the peace between us. Now will you shake hands, little girl?"

She came nearer to him, and laid her hand quickly in his out-stretched palm.

"I think you are very good to me," she said, with a sudden wistfulness in her eyes, and a tremor about her lips, "and yet I did dread seeing you. And oh! you do not know how homesick I have been, and how I longed to see my cousin Bert, if only for five minutes."

"There must be no more loneliness than we can help," her guardian said, touched inexpressibly by the swift change in the girl's manner, and reading in the pure young face depths of feeling he had not suspected; "and as for Cousin Bert, we will have him over here next year, anyway."

But even while they were talking a message was speeding along the wires from Little Barnford to London, and two people, who had come to terms of as confidential an understanding as Gladys and her guardian, were walking away from the telegraph-office and down the fragrant Devonshire lane that led to the slope near the Tor House. One of these was Winnie Beresford, and the other a cheery-faced little elderly gentleman, into whose arms Gladys Ferrol would have sprung could she have met them, for it was no other than Cousin Bert himself.

CHAPTER XLII.

A WELCOME VISITOR.

LEFT alone, Gladys tried to collect her thoughts, but everything in her mind seemed almost too confused for her to realize what she felt, or why the aspect of her life seemed so completely changed since the morning. But gradually as she sat upon the hearth-rug it came to her that the real cause of this bewilderment was the fact that her guardian was so wholly different from anything she had expected. The kindly look of his eyes, his pleasant smile, which, for all the resolution that his mouth and chin expressed, seemed so natural a part of his expression, the tones of his voice, and the sympathy and interest evident in his manner while she talked to him of her own life in England—all of these elements in their first interview became at last distinct, and Gladys was conscious that she had been terribly afraid of this unknown guardian, and that now the main part of her dread had vanished into thin air. He might be resolute, and perhaps a trifle dictatorial at times, but he was sure to be sympathetic and kind.

“I like him—oh, I am sure I like him,” was Gladys’s mental summing up, and then her reflections on this subject

were brought to a sudden stand-still. The footman came in, bearing on his salver a telegram for Gladys, who sprang up and opened it with trembling fingers. Over and over again she read the words before she could take in their meaning:

"I will be with you at five o'clock this afternoon. Arrived in England yesterday. All well at home."

"BERTRAND FERROL."

Cousin Bert in England! On his way, perhaps, now to London! Oh, could it be true?

It was well for Gladys that Lady Marchmont appeared at this moment to receive the first transports of her little cousin's joy and excitement. At five o'clock! and it was only two now. There were three hours to be gotten rid of somehow, and Gladys, who had found the days all too short since Arthur was out of danger, began to count up all her most diverting resources to while away the three times sixty minutes which had to elapse before she would be face to face with the dearest being in all her world.

"Sit down and tell me all about Arthur Paget's visit," said Lady Marchmont, as they went in to luncheon and the servants were dismissed.

Gladys rushed into a recital, over which the old lady smiled two or three times in secret satisfaction. Everything apparently would go as she wished it.

"Take Jarvis, my dear," said Lady Marchmont after lunch, "and go down to Mickleham Square. I know that you are dying to tell the Beresfords all your news."

And so in half an hour Gladys was with her friends again, pouring forth to these most interested listeners an account of all that had happened. And Janey had just received a letter from Winifred containing something well worth reading aloud. It had been posted late the night before, after a visit from Mrs. Cleve's little Susan.

"Susan came over," wrote Winifred, "to tell us that a gentleman from America had engaged her aunt's rooms for two weeks, and that he would be at Little Barnford in a short time. It seems that he had called at the Manor-house to find Gladys, and Miss Dymond was in the worst possible temper, and told him that she believed we knew a great deal more about Gladys Ferrol than she did. He came over, Johnny Cleve having walked with him to show the way, and he was just as nice as nice can be, and I am so glad to find he is the cousin Bert Gladys talked to us about. He is going to London to-morrow, but will be over at Little Barnford early in the morning. He sat with mamma and me talking a long time, and we felt as if we had known him years. Papa came in, but I am sorry to say he was not very friendly, and I am afraid that he gave Mr. Ferrol an idea that we were sorry Gladys was our cousin. You can imagine how dear mamma felt about it all, and how sweetly she spoke of Gladys's goodness to us in London."

"Oh, Gladys," cried Janey, coloring violently, "I did not mean you to read that part; but when you see papa you will understand it better."

"I know," said Gladys, comfortably. "Cousin Bert would

understand it all in a minute. If there was anything on earth I wanted, it was to have him here just at this very moment. Arthur," she added, "Lady Marchmont said that if you thought you felt well enough she would send the carriage for you after dinner, so that you and Janey could spend the evening in Park Lane."

Arthur, it seemed to Gladys, was the only one of the party who did not enter with great enthusiasm into the fact that her guardian and Cousin Bert had both arrived. But the fact was that he foresaw an interruption to their delightful hours of companionship.

"I don't know that I care about meeting Captain Paget," he said, a trifle gloomily, "I'd rather have an hour's talk with you, Gladys, to-morrow."

But Janey was beaming over the idea of such a grand visit. The morning in Park Lane and the drive in the Park had been delightful enough, but to go there "dressed up," so far as her limited wardrobe would allow, and spend an evening in the charming drawing-room with grown-up people, and everything like what she had read about in books, this created a temptation too strong to be resisted, and Arthur's moodiness was dispelled when he caught the look of pleading in her blue eyes. A discussion in the privacy of her own room ensued, Gladys entering heartily into the young girl's desire to look well on this great occasion, and it resulted in the arrival, a few hours later, of a box from Russell's containing a dress of white nuns'-veiling, the very prettiest Janey had ever seen, and with it a great bouquet of roses,

sent with Lady Marchmont's love, but in her heart of hearts Janey well knew Gladys to be the donor.

What an afternoon it was! Gladys hurried back from Mickleham Square, and punctual to the minute Cousin Bert appeared. A tight hug, with her face pressed against his, a little dash of tears, and then — "Oh, why did you come? what brought you over so suddenly?" cried Gladys, still holding both his hands, and looking up into that kindest of all faces, every line in which was dear to her.

"Why, you see," said Cousin Bert, allowing himself to be conducted to an easy-chair, while Gladys, still rapturous, knelt down beside him, "I've had an unusually lucky stroke of business lately, and I had just been talking with Lois about running over here to have a look at our little girl, when her guardian arrived, and there came a letter from Mrs. Hildreth."

"Oh!" cried Gladys, "I suppose she represented me as a perfect loon."

Cousin Bert laughed, and stroked the brown head near his shoulder.

"Well, my dear," he said, his eyes twinkling humorously, "I can't say that her account of you, or rather of what you were doing with your money, was very satisfactory. You see, we had all sorts of fears about you, and I was chiefly anxious to have a plain understanding with this guardian of yours." Mr. Ferrol paused, the merriment leaving his face. "I want him," he continued, gravely, "and I want *you*, Gladys, to understand one thing in the start—I'm a richer

man than I used to be, and there is enough and to spare for you in the old home. If you don't want to stay here, why, the colonel's money may go to thunder! I'm not going to have it make my girl unhappy for a moment. I'll say my say in a straightforward, business-like fashion, and then we'll find out what the restrictions of the will are, and it shall be for you to decide whether you'll take it or leave it. There's a thousand dollars, Gladys, in the bank at Harringford in your name already as a nest egg, and Lois and I have planned how we can spare after this five hundred dollars a year to add to it, so that by the time you're twenty-one you can have something to call your own—and you'll have it in American dollars and cents, hang it!" cried Cousin Bert. "There's that comfort in it at the start."

Gladys laughed, and answered her cousin with another impetuous hug, which he bore with equanimity in spite of its necessitating a rearrangement of the white satin necktie with which he had decorated himself for dinner at Lady Marchmont's. An hour passed in the most interesting talk, Gladys giving Cousin Bert a sketch of the Beresford family, so far as she knew them, and he in turn relating his experience at the Tor House.

"My gracious, Gladys!" he said, lowering his tone, "I wonder how those young people exist in that gloomy house! And the father! They say he is a wonderful scholar, but I wouldn't have his disposition for all the brains you could collect in Europe. He talked in phrases that made me think of Addison and Samuel Johnson, and I don't know who all.



AN HOUR PASSED IN THE MOST INTERESTING TALK.

I tell you it gave me the shivers. I'd like to bring those young people up here, and give them a regular good time for once in their lives."

Gladys declared this would be delightful. When Lady Marchmont appeared, followed by Captain Paget, a sociable fifteen minutes ensued before dinner, and at that meal was it not delightful to hear Cousin Bert and her guardian talk. Gladys thrilled with pride as Mr. Ferrol discussed Eastern questions with the recently returned officer, and it became evident that Captain Paget was most agreeably impressed by his ward's American relation. When she and Lady Marchmont withdrew, leaving the gentlemen to continue their conversation, it was natural that they should drift on to the subject of immediate importance to them both—the future of Gladys Ferrol and the colonel's money.

Mr. Ferrol made the same statement he had prepared for Gladys, putting forth his own ideas in the most forcible way he could think of, and Captain Paget listened, keenly interested and sympathetic, beginning to understand whence came the peculiar unworldliness and simplicity, the straightforwardness of motive, which had so captivated him in his talk that morning with his ward.

"I understand you thoroughly, sir," he said, after listening in respectful silence to all that Mr. Ferrol had to say; "but, on the other hand, it is my duty to lay before Gladys the immense advantages of such a fortune. Unless first impressions are very wrong, I am inclined to think she is a girl who will use her money to a good purpose, and you see there

is a great deal of it. There are no doubt certain restrictions attached to her use of it, but she will be at eighteen in control of at least a million dollars, and it seems to me not fair that she should at fifteen decide whether or not to give it all up. I am bound according to my instructions to conduct her education on certain fixed principles. I can go over them all with you any time you like, but the main points are these: she is to study political economy, and as much of social science as can be taught her, but she is to know as little as possible of what may be called society. Colonel Dymond had an idea that an American girl brought up in this fashion would make an excellent use of a fortune. Literature and the languages she is to be, if possible, well versed in, but no novels, or what one might call light reading, are to be allowed." He smiled. "A peculiar will, you think, Mr. Ferrol, but Colonel Dymond had his own ideas as to what the result of all this would be. He wished her at eighteen to start out with definite views of life, and as original a way of looking at it as possible. I am in hopes that Lady Marchmont can receive her here during six months of the year, and the rest of the time she can pass in her own house, the Priory, where I hope she will receive her American relations very often as guests."

Mr. Ferrol acknowledged the compliment, and then said, a little hurriedly,

"About these Beresfords. I had a talk with Mrs. Beresford at Little Barnford. And I am inclined to think that this Captain John, as they call him, is a good deal of a

knave. I mean to go out to-morrow morning to the place where they live, and I shall be surprised if I don't learn a few things before I return."

"If you get the better of John Beresford," said Gladys's guardian, laughing, "I shall be very much astonished. I've always had a feeling that he was somehow at the bottom of Colonel Dymond's leaving his brother Ralph as well as himself out of the will, but of course he's too shrewd to tell us more than we know."

CHAPTER XLIII.

DECISIONS.

COUSIN BERT returned from his visit to Alexandra Villa in a state of such amusement that he could hardly discuss any business matters seriously with Gladys. Sarah had taken him, he declared, completely by storm, and had he but known it, the girl was wise enough to perceive at once that his opposition would be worse for their prospects than anybody else's. She had amused Mr. Ferrol to such an extent that he was willing to encounter even some annoyance from the captain for the sake of a little more fun of the same kind. Her way of putting forth the family necessities and what she called their rights, her sweeping remarks on society in general and certain "stuck-up" people in particular, her disregard of h's, and her frank avowal of admiration for Gladys, all combined to carry the little gentleman completely out of himself; and while recounting it to Gladys, as they drove together to his lodgings in Half-moon Street, he roared so heartily as he recalled some of Sarah's mannerisms and modes of speech, that the driver of the hansom opened his little trap once or twice, curious to know what was up with his "fare."

Sarah had by this time determined to carry her point and secure the ten thousand pounds, come what might. "Oh, let him come and talk to me," she had remarked to Rosamond Jane and her mother, on hearing that they might expect a visit from Gladys's American cousin. "I'll be even with him, and I'll speak right up to his face."

She had whirled down-stairs into the dingy sitting-room, where from the first moment she had taken Mr. Ferrol by surprise. He had been charmed the evening before by the young Beresfords. Arthur's boyish good looks were the more attractive since his illness; at least the look of intensity in his dark eyes and the refined outline of his features were more marked, and Janey in her white gown, with the red roses in her belt, was the personification of a sweet little English maiden. Could it be, thought Mr. Ferrol, that this striking-looking, impetuous, and over-dressed girl, who fairly rushed at him, and seemed to have a whole volume of talk to pour forth, was their cousin? Among Sarah's determinations was not to be "ashamed of anything."

"Oh, I know," she said, almost at once, to the visitor, "this ain't like what you've been seeing at Lady Marchmont's house; but you must recollect, sir, we're only the poor relations, and take us as you find us. Ma will be down directly. I suppose you've seen that Captain Paget," continued Sarah, elevating her nose; "that is, if he's had time to rest himself after his exertions among the savages. Does he seem very much worn out? No! Well, I *am* surprised. I didn't know ~~as~~ we should ever have the pleasure of seeing him on both

his legs again. Him and me have had one falling out—that was not long before the old colonel's death—and we are likely to have another. But I wish you'd tell him from me, as shall certainly say my say. The last time he was dreadfully busy getting ready to go away to Afghanistan, but now that he's killed nearly everybody out there, he's likely to have a little breathing-time before the children grow up and he'll have to make an end of them."

Mr. Ferrol very speedily encouraged Sarah to express all her opinions, and if he came away, as I have said, intensely amused, he was not the less fixed in his idea that Captain Beresford knew more than he chose to tell. He had an interview with that gentleman, which resulted in the captain's deciding that he had better be frank to a certain extent with the gentleman from America, and so he had avowed in all his transactions with his Jewish friend, declaring airily that he had felt certain Gladys's word could be relied upon, and that ready money was a necessity. This was a complication which Mr. Ferrol realized as the most serious result of Gladys's impulsive generosity, and after lunching with her he presented himself at Captain Paget's rooms, where the two guardians of Gladys's interests talked the matter over.

"You must not be angry," Mr. Ferrol said at once, "if I admit to you that I have no intention of advising Gladys to break her word. I'd rather she gave up a hundred thousand pounds than do anything which she felt to be dishonorable. You see, I can't look at it from a simply legal point of view."

Captain Paget explained that he had considered the mat-

ter in this light himself, and agreeing with Mr. Ferrol that the moral side of the case was the strongest, the only thing that remained for them to do was to insure the money being settled upon the family, so that no further advances could be procured by Captain Beresford.

"That girl Sarah," said Captain Paget, laughing, "has a decided talent for business, and I really don't know that we could do better than make her to a certain degree responsible for the way the money is employed. I will think it over, and see how Mr. Melrose can tie up the principal and make the income of real advantage to the deserving members of the family."

The result of all this was an invitation from no less a person than Captain Paget himself, which threw the inmates of Alexandra Villa into a condition of supreme excitement.

Captain Paget had appreciated and sympathized with Mr. Ferrol's sense of the ludicrous in Sarah's attitude towards them all, and was not above having a little amusement out of it himself, especially after what he had overheard the morning of his arrival; accordingly he addressed the invitation referred to very respectfully to Sarah herself.

"Well, what's coming next?" cried that young person, as the postman delivered into her hands an envelope bearing the Paget crest. "Ma! Rosamond Jane! just come down here!" she called out; and on being joined by the other members of the family, she read aloud with a dramatic emphasis the following note:

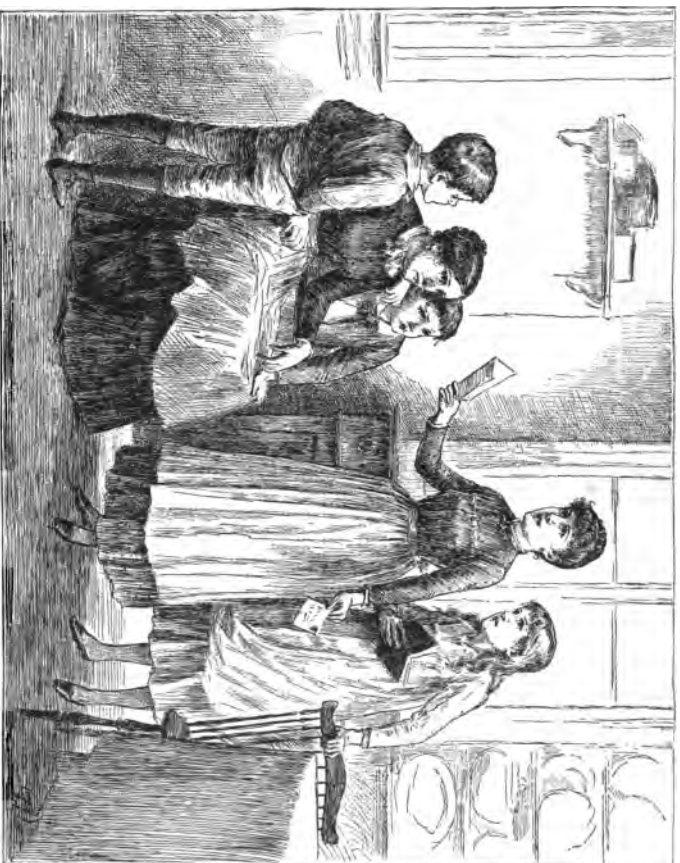
“MY DEAR MISS BERESFORD,—When you last did me the honor of paying me a visit I was not in a position to take any of your demands into consideration. Since then, as you know, events have made me guardian of Colonel Dymond's heiress, and to a certain extent able to advise, or I might say control, the use to which she puts some of her fortune. She has informed me of her promise to make over to your family the sum of ten thousand pounds on her coming of age. While of course, as you must be aware, such a promise could not be in any way binding from a legal point of view, I have no wish to interfere with the keeping of her word of honor, but it has occurred to me that a more satisfactory arrangement may be made, whereby a certain income may be settled upon your family at once. I write, therefore, to ask you and your mother to meet Miss Ferrol and her cousin Mr. Ferrol and myself at Lady Marchmont's house on Thursday morning at eleven o'clock, when we can talk this matter over.

“Thanks for your kind consideration of my health and my personal safety. I am beginning to recuperate somewhat after my exertions in Afghanistan.

“Pray believe me, very truly yours,

“‘ARTHUR ST. MAUR PAGET.’”

Sarah's face changed color once or twice while she was reading the above letter. She was not altogether certain of the captain's sincerity, and for a moment her valiant spirit quailed as she wondered just how Mr. Ferrol had repeated



SARAH'S FACE CHANGED COLOR WHILE SHE WAS READING THE LETTER.

her remarks, and in what way they had been received. But nothing could very long keep this ardent young person depressed. She rose speedily to all the necessities of the situation. "Ma," she said, solemnly, "we must go right upstairs and look over your things; and one thing I'm decided upon—pa sha'n't have *one* word to say until we have been down there."

The rest of the day Miss Beresford moved about the house with a majestic calm which was entirely new to her, and had the effect of overawing the rest of the family. Whatever they might have thought of her before, she was recognized now as the one who might hold their fate in the palm of her hand; and if she was somewhat severe in her manner, there was no doubt an excuse for it in consideration of the immensity of her exertions on their behalf.

"Come here," she said, almost tragically, to Dymond and Paget, when, after tea, those two insignificant members of the family circle were silently engaged in a trial of muscle in one corner of the sitting-room. "I don't want any noise or nonsense this evening; do you understand? I've a great deal on my mind, and in years to come you may look back, children, to this day and remember that all your wealth and greatness came through your sister Sarah."

Whether or not the twins were sufficiently appreciative of what this speech hinted at I am not prepared to say, but they were certainly subdued by Sarah's manner. One more evidence of what she considered her rights she gave. The family had all read Captain Paget's letter at intervals of the

day, and at bedtime Mrs. Beresford was about to lock it up in the old secretary which stood in one corner of the room ; but Sarah, still majestic, held out her hand. "If you please, ma," she said, with dignity, "*I'll* take that letter. I think you'll find it's addressed to me." But hearing the captain's footstep, she suffered a slight nervousness to overcome her. The letter was hastily locked into the secretary, Sarah little dreaming of what she would encounter when she came to take it out again.

CHAPTER XLIV.

SARAH IS A HEROINE.

SARAH took every one by surprise the next day. Indeed, Rosamond Jane averred that something had been the matter with her since the night before. After every one was in bed she had gone down-stairs to get possession of her precious letter—the first, perhaps the only one, which she would receive from so distinguished a gentleman, and written in such “elegant” language, bearing about it those unmistakable marks of aristocratic Belgravia; but when she had returned to her bedroom she looked pale and anxious. She was excited and yet quiet, and then the next morning she declared her intention of going to Park Lane alone, or it might be with Rosamond Jane. None of Mrs. John’s arguments against this was of the least avail; but although there was a certain light in her eye and an alertness in her step, Sarah was strangely quiet when, with her younger sister, she started forth to keep the appointment Captain Paget had made.

Meanwhile the party in Park Lane were full of a pleasant expectancy. Gladys was delighted to find her two guardians, as she called them, on such good terms, and she had

no doubt at all that everything would soon be comfortably arranged. Captain Paget (or, as he was now to be called, Colonel Paget), after a long conference with Mr. Melrose, had drawn up certain papers which were likely to be satisfactory to the John Beresfords, and certainly to their advantage. Moreover, yielding to Gladys's strong persuasions that the young people of the Tor House must also be looked after, he had telegraphed requesting the presence of Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Beresford in London on business of importance, but, as he told his ward, he feared little could be done with so proud and prejudiced a person as his cousin Ralph.

Gladys on this eventful morning vibrated between Lady Marchmont's little sofa, where there was just room for one person besides herself, and the window, exclaiming at last, as a hansom pulled up before the door, and Sarah sprang out, turning to assist her lame sister,

"There is Sarah, but where is Mrs. John? There is only Rosamond Jane with her."

The gentlemen stopped their discussion of matters of the day, and all waited in silence while Mr. Gott's step, followed by those of the two visitors, was heard on the staircase. Then the door of the drawing-room was thrown open, and Sarah felt her spirits rise as she heard her name formally announced, and found herself face to face once more with her old enemy, as she had chosen to consider him. But how different was his manner on this occasion! Perhaps, had Sarah been a little more critical of shades of distinction in such matters, she might have thought his politeness a trifle too emphatic;

but at all events it was very nice to find herself so cordially received, and presented to Lady Marchmont so affably. The charm of the exquisitely appointed room was not lost upon her either. Perhaps, as she seated herself, with Rosamond Jane at her side, on a long plush-covered sofa, a dim feeling that these people, whose pretensions to superiority she had so scorned, understood certain matters better than she could hope to do overcame her for a few moments; but the real cause of the falter in her manner and the look of anxious perplexity on her face was because of a certain letter lying by the side of her precious invitation in her pocket, almost burning there while she answered Colonel Paget when he inquired about her mother's absence.

"Oh, ma," said Sarah, with rising color, "she couldn't come—that is, I didn't want her to, because I've something to tell you I didn't choose to have her hear."

"Why, Sarah!" cried her sister.

"Never you mind, Rosamond Jane," retorted the elder girl, laughing a little hysterically. "I knew well enough what I was about. But we'd better let the gentlemen speak first. That's what we were sent for, as I understand it."

"Yes, Miss Beresford," said the colonel, anxious to be as brief as possible. "Your father admitted to Mr. Ferrol that he had borrowed money to a certain extent on the strength of the money my ward had promised you. Now there is no use in our stopping to discuss certain details. The only way in which I'll consent to the ten thousand pounds being made use of at once is the following: If you

- can obtain from your father a full statement of just how much money he has borrowed, and get him to sign the agreement I have drawn up, whereby he promises to make no further demands now or at any other time upon my ward, I will see that the debt is paid, and whatever remains of the sum promised shall be invested so that the income derived from it may be immediately devoted to the support and education of yourself and your brothers and sister. Remember that the income is to be paid out judiciously, and only on the understanding that it is applied to the purposes I have specified. You must know that Colonel Dymond had every reason for leaving your father out of the will. He had paid his debts over and over again, and your father had several times applied the money sent for educational purposes to his own ends. You must forgive me if I pain you by referring to these things, but you are among friends who understand it all, and it is only by frankly discussing with you how best to keep the money away from your father's control that we can really help you in the right way."

Sarah had felt an angry spirit of opposition rise within her for a moment, but something in Gladys's face had suddenly checked it. There was genuine kindness in the colonel's voice and manner, and as she swept the group with her glance the entire absence of that element which so sorely wounded her pride among the people whom she called "swells" affected her, sending her indignation into another channel. Oh, why had her father not kept himself such a man as he might have been, fit to associate with people like

these! Suddenly poor Sarah realized, although in a confused way, her own deficiencies; and then there was that letter still hidden in her pocket. Suppose that it made a difference—suppose that by taking it out and flinging it into this little group of friendly counsellors, it should scatter to the winds all her own hopes of riches and prosperity! Knowing all of Sarah Beresford's antecedents, I own that what she did was almost more than could have been expected of her; and it must be remembered she had not known people who acted upon really generous motives well enough to have any notion that by yielding to the impulse which took possession of her she would really be creating a stronger feeling in her favor. She slipped her hand into her pocket, feeling for the letter, only conscious that something within her demanded that it should be shown. Conscience alone was struggling over her pride and ambition, as Sarah exclaimed, standing up, and looking at the colonel with burning eyes,

“Stop! You'd better not promise until you hear something I've got to say. This is why I wouldn't let ma come with me. I didn't know how she'd take it; but last night I was rummaging in an old secretary, and just by chance I opened the private drawer, and—there was a letter in it, which I suppose pa never meant should be delivered. At least I suppose, from all I know, the right person never got it. There! you can read it, and judge for yourself.”

Rosamond had caught hold of her sister's dress, uttering a little cry of remonstrance, but Sarah shook off the detain-

ing hand. She felt all the excitement of heroism now, and was willing to admit that there was a satisfaction in acting up to the promptings of conscience. She handed Colonel Paget a letter addressed, as he saw at the first glance, to Ralph Beresford, in his late uncle's handwriting.

"You can see for yourself," continued Sarah, excitedly, "just what he says in there."

Colonel Paget looked around him in dismay, although he began to take in the reality of the position, and suspect that this letter, so long hidden in Captain Beresford's possession, was of great importance.

"But how do you know, Miss Beresford?" he asked, lifting his eyes from the familiar superscription.

Sarah laughed. "Why, child alive!" she exclaimed, her old manner returning for the moment, "how should I know except by reading it? Why don't you read it yourself?" she urged, impatiently.

The little group who had drawn together exchanged glances, and Sarah suddenly understood what they meant. A burning wave of color that seemed to scorch her cheeks swept across them. The girl's dark eyes suddenly filled with tears.

"I see what you mean," she said, walking over to the window. "You think it was mean of me to have read it, but I tell you it never entered my head not to. That's all I can say. And so long as I did do it, I may as well tell you that Colonel Dymond meant to do well by Uncle Ralph, if only he'd got the letter and come to London in time."

Gladys sprang forward from among the group, who seemed to poor Sarah, with their fine sense of honor, to be sitting in judgment upon her. Somehow Gladys had divined the struggle it had caused her cousin to give the letter up.

"Oh, Sarah!" she exclaimed, holding out both her hands, "I am so glad you brought the letter! Now everything is going to be happy for all of us. I am thankful enough that I promised you what I did." Sarah looked at her American cousin, not understanding for a moment just what to make of this. The others were consulting among themselves, and she caught the fragment of a sentence while Mr. Ferrol looked at his watch. "He can be here any minute now," the gentleman Sarah liked so much was saying. They seemed to be weighing her in the balance and deciding against her, but Sarah took comfort from the fact that Gladys Ferrol was her friend. She looked into the girl's face, and said, quietly,

"Well, anyway, I knew *you* meant what you said, and I really never thought any harm could come of my reading the letter."

No one noticed the sound of wheels stopping suddenly outside of the green door-way; and while the hum of voices was going on, while Rosamond Jane was trembling silently in her corner of the sofa, and Sarah and Gladys were still holding each other's hands, the door was opened, there was the sound of Mr. Gott's voice, and then the sharp, querulous accents of Winifred's father were heard breaking in upon the momentary lull which had occurred.

"If I have been mistaken as to the nature of the telegram sent me yesterday," he was saying, looking from one to another of the agitated company with gloomy disapproval, "I should like to be told of it at once, that I may take a convenient train for home."

Colonel Paget detached himself hurriedly from the group, and came forward, holding out his hand cordially.

"You were not mistaken, Ralph," he said; "there is a matter of grave importance waiting for you. Perhaps, Lady Marchmont, you will excuse our going into the next room for a moment while my cousin reads the letter."

CHAPTER XLV.

FORGIVEN AND FORGOTTEN.

SARAH was the only one of the party not burning with curiosity while Colonel Paget and Mr. Beresford were absent. She knew that the letter stated in very plain terms Colonel Dymond's offer to forget the differences of opinion he had had with his nephew if the latter would come to see him in a friendly spirit and talk over family matters with a view to his making a definite settlement upon Ralph Beresford and his children. The fact that Ralph was staying at the time in his brother's house accounted for the suppression of the letter, and within one week of its date the colonel's sudden death had taken place. In spite of her own curious interest in the whole affair, Lady Marchmont did not forget her part as hostess, and her natural kindness of heart brought her to Sarah's rescue just as the latter was beginning to feel decidedly uncomfortable.

"My dear," she said, looking at Gladys, and from her to the two Beresfords, "suppose you take your cousins up to your room and let them lay aside their wraps, for of course they must stay for lunch."

Sarah was herself again. She had never been on social

terms in any such house; and to take lunch with this company, served, as well she knew it would be, in an "elegant" manner, made Sarah feel as though the sacrifice of her feelings had its compensation. No one suspected how delighted she was to be escorted up-stairs to Gladys's charming little dressing-room, to have Mary Jarvis assist Rosamond Jane and herself in their slight preparations for lunch, and to spend half an hour in the examination of the articles of use and ornament in the two rooms devoted to her cousin's use. As might be expected, she gave Gladys a *résumé* of the important letter, silencing all scruples on her cousin's part by declaring "of course everybody'd know *now*," and indeed by the time the girls went down to luncheon every one *did* seem acquainted with the contents of the long-hidden treasure, and some of the party had evidently come to very rapid decisions. Mr. Beresford was the strangest member of the company—at least he was, so those who knew him thought, curiously altered. Nothing could take away the severity of his composure, and yet he was certainly excited, flushed, anxious, and unusually handsome, and perhaps for the first time in his life awakened to the fact that his fellow-beings really meant him well; but no one present knew the secret of the man's real change of feeling. His wife, who was waiting for him in Mickleham Square, would have understood it at a glance, just as she knew, though she never put it into words, how bitter was his disappointment in himself in those literary ventures which he had obstinately refused to give up, and yet which in his heart of hearts

he knew constituted the failure of his life. Out of them had come his first quarrels with his late uncle, who was wise enough to see that Ralph Beresford never would be a successful writer. And yet the uncle who had scorned his pursuits had rendered him justice in the letter which had come to him in this strange fashion! "God has made you what you are," Colonel Dymond had written—"a genius; and if your efforts have not brought pecuniary rewards, I suppose we must accept it as other men of your kind have had to before you." Was it not, after all, the tribute to the spark which the man had felt burning within him which now had flushed and exhilarated him?—and because of this, he told himself, he would not interfere with part at least of what they told him that generous-minded young girl, his American kinswoman, desired to do.

Legally speaking, the actual results were of course in the hands of the girl whom a year ago no one present, unless it was Lady Marchmont, had ever heard of, and seven months before had been received among them with such chilling and doubtful welcome. But who, knowing her, or even looking at her now, could question her heart?—and where this was so deeply moved, and her sense of right so strongly appealed to, Gladys Ferrol was not likely to fall short of high expectations.

It was a strange little company that assembled for the first time together around Lady Marchmont's hospitable board. Sarah was keenly observant of everything. Her expectant glance took in with profound satisfaction the

quiet elegancies of the room, the brilliant silver and glass, the flowers on the table, even the peculiar fitness of the viands with which she was served. Everything seemed to her just what it should be in a household where the mistress was an earl's daughter, and in spite of a slight feeling of awkwardness, and not knowing just what to do, she tried to remember that as a Beresford she had a right to be there. But on the whole, even Lady Marchmont and Colonel Paget failed to infuse the right sort of element into the oddly assorted party, and Sarah was glad to go up-stairs again—glad even to renew the business discussion which her uncle's entrance had so opportunely interrupted.

When Colonel Paget drew her aside to talk "confidentially," all her natural buoyancy returned, and I doubt if any one had ever found Sarah so open to advice. The end of it all was that she and Rosamond Jane departed with Mr. Ferrol for Alexandra Villa, where Captain John was to be reduced to submission, and further acts of indiscretion on his part prevented. Meanwhile the council at Lady Marchmont's, consisting of the old lady, Gladys, and her guardian, remained. Mr. Beresford had gone off to Mickleham Square, where he was anxiously expected.

"Well, Gladys," said the colonel, looking at his ward with a smile, "this has been a queer morning. And just to think you are the cause of it all! You, it seems, are our family peace-maker."

"It's so foolish to quarrel," said Gladys.

"Well, and now that you have produced this complication,



"IF YOU REMAIN IN ENGLAND, YOU ARE TO MAKE YOUR HOME WITH LADY MARCHMONT."

may I ask what you mean to do?" he inquired, with a provoking manner.

"To do?" cried Gladys; and then she added, smiling, "Oh, Lady Marchmont knows! I want to have things all settled comfortably for the Beresfords. I— But where am I to live?" she said, suddenly breaking off.

"If you remain in England," answered her guardian, "you are—so we wiseacres think—to make your home with Lady Marchmont."

"Oh!" cried Gladys. The tone and the sparkle of her eyes were answer enough.

"And we have thought of suggesting an arrangement whereby, if you liked, Winifred and Janey Beresford could board with some nice person and share your lessons."

"Delightful! Oh, how good of you all!"

"But, my dear, have you reflected that all this arrangement, as you call it, for the Beresfords must come out of your fortune, not in small sums here and there, but in a fixed income such as no doubt Colonel Dymond intended leaving?"

Gladys nodded. "Of course," she said, rather scornful of such details. "Only mind and see when you are arranging it, please, that Arthur has his own allowance."

"Very well. Now, then, Gladys, am I to understand that you wish me to use the power I have until you are of age, and make over a certain sum to your cousins at the Tor House?"

Gladys paused, but her hesitation was only because of

her doubt as to how large a sum she could thus dispose of.

"What do you think of another ten thousand pounds?" the colonel inquired.

"Will that be enough?" she said, anxiously.

And so, as far as Gladys was concerned, neither argument nor persuasion was necessary. About five o'clock she went off very happily with Lady Marchmont in the brougham to Mickleham Square, where the old lady looked forward to meeting "Jean Rothsay," after all the strange jars and changes of years. It was hard for the sunny-tempered, light-hearted girl at her side to understand that there should be such shadows in a family like Lady Marchmont's, and perhaps her companion knew that Gladys would have been shocked and startled had she known how worldly, and even mercenary, were the causes for these vaguely defined family differences, and so she wisely forbore to dwell upon them. It was certainly a harmonious family group that the visitors came in upon, the soft shadows of the afternoon subduing everything in Mrs. Brown's drawing-room, so that nothing looked out of place, and the centre of the group, the sweet-faced, patient little mother, with a hand clasped in each of her children's, seemed to concentrate and draw about her a look of home-like security and content.

There was a little confusion as Lady Marchmont and Gladys appeared, a quick movement, and then, "Jean, my dear, I am so glad to see you!" said the old lady, holding out her hands and drawing Mrs. Beresford towards her. What was

time, after all, as she had herself once said to Gladys, to this old lady, whose youth with its tumults, its sharp pains and disappointments, lay far off in the distance? It might have been only yesterday that she had gone to see Jean Rothsay a winsome, happy bride. "My dear," the old lady continued, looking at the younger woman with tears running down her withered cheeks, "we mean to forget everything unhappy or unkind that has ever happened, and be just as if it was twenty years ago."

And then while the young people, moved by a common impulse of sympathy and attraction, had drawn together, leaving the two old friends in a tranquil space of the little room, an unexpected voice sounded from the window.

"We must not forget," Mr. Beresford was saying, in tones which, although formal, had a certain accent of happiness in them, "that we owe all this proper state of things to our young cousin Gladys Ferrol."

CHAPTER XLVI.

BURLINGTON HOUSE AND A TEA-PARTY.

ON a certain brilliant afternoon in May a party of young people formed a centre of attraction in one of the side rooms at Burlington House, the home of the Royal Academy of Arts in London. So much light-heartedness and animation and good-humor seemed to be concentrated in them that the passers-by failed often to look beyond to the picture which they were one and all surveying with exclamations of pride and delight and the most unqualified approval. But the picture itself had already attracted considerable attention. To begin with, it was known to be the work of a very young artist, and the fact that he was a connection of Bruce, the great painter, made him and his work subjects of decided interest even among those who might otherwise have failed to detect the youthful genius rising among them.

Arthur Beresford was undoubtedly enchanted to have his picture "hung," but he was eager to stand entirely on his own merits; and while he could not fail to enjoy Mr. Bruce's recognition of his talent, and the attentions shown him at Morpeth Lodge, yet he resented the perpetual occurrence of the great man's name in the criticisms showered upon him.

But in the group we have referred to there were no such allusions. Barbara Bruce was there, no doubt, a striking little figure in her gown of Titian red, with a broad-brimmed hat, below which those wonderful ripples of shining hair fell in the style Mrs. John had considered too childish for her years; but Gladys Ferrol was the centre, the dominating influence of the little party, and she uttered her criticisms in a way which swept all doubt or hesitation before them.

"Arthur said he wanted a very simple title," she was saying, as Cousin Bert and Colonel Paget joined them, "so that is why he simply calls it 'Girl with a Mandolin.'"

"Well, that is just what it is," said Janey Beresford, nodding her head sagely. "And it looks a little like Winifred; don't you think so?"

The young critics looked from Arthur's picture to Winifred's sweet face, framed in the little bonnet which she had chosen to wear in the consciousness of her seventeen-year-old dignity.

"Well, I certainly sat for it," she admitted; "and oh, how hard Arthur worked those last days! I am so glad," she added, with a little pressure of Gladys's hand, "that it was ready for your birthday!"

The hero of the occasion was seen approaching them at this moment with an evident effort at great indifference, but he could not resist answering the happy smile with which Gladys welcomed him.

"It's not a bad frame, after all, is it?" he said, approaching the picture and inspecting its setting with an anxious

frown; "but I did think at one time it would get no frame at all, Fuller was so confoundedly particular about it after Mr. Bruce went in there."

"Oh, I think it's just *lovely*," said little Barbara.

"Rainham's old brocade turned out pretty well after all, didn't it?" said the young artist, turning back with a smile to Winifred, who had been forced to confess that the costume, in spite of its antiquity, was a success. Certainly, whatever the faults of the picture, enough of merit in composition and color existed to justify the critics in saying that Arthur Beresford's future lay prosperously before him. He had been wise enough not to attempt any elaborate effects, and yet its very simplicity made it the more easily criticised, for the girl's figure leaning against the framework of an old window was the one object of interest. She was looking down upon the mandolin, evidently dreaming over some fancy her own music had evoked. Arthur might live to paint a great many pictures, to have magic initials after his name, and to be talked of as an authority among great men of his day, but I doubt if any work of his could seem to Gladys and his sisters quite so wonderful as this first picture that he had seen hung upon the walls which had so long seemed to him the "open sesame" to fame and fortune. Others in the crowd thronging the attractive rooms were discussing not only Arthur, but the curious circumstances of Gladys Ferrol's life.

"Yes, that is she," Miss Violet Bruce was saying to half a dozen interested auditors, "the tall girl in the gray dress.

I must say we are all very proud of her, although, of course, no one liked it at first. It seemed such an eccentric thing to leave an enormous fortune to an American girl that not one of us had even thought of in the light of a relation. And do you know," she added, smiling, and glancing at Mr. Ferrol's figure across the gallery, "there actually was at one time an idea on her part and that of a cousin she had lived with in America that she had better give it all up. But Arthur Paget is so sensible! He declared that it was not fair to have her come to any decision until she was older, and by that time I don't doubt she will have learned how to appreciate her position. The young people and our newly found genius Arthur Beresford are all coming to tea at our house, and I really am glad to have you meet my little cousin Gladys."

A few minutes later Gladys was saying, in an amused undertone, to her guardian, "Cousin Arthur, look into the next room. There are the Hildreths, and, do you see, the John Beresfords have actually got hold of them!"

It certainly was the case. A short time previously the Hildreths had appeared, loud in their demonstrations of delight on finding Gladys and her cousins, and then they had unconsciously drifted into the very room where Sarah Beresford, gorgeously attired, with Algy and the redoubtable Mr. Smith, were standing before a large allegorical picture which Sarah had designated as "something out of the Bible." They too had come to the Academy to see Arthur Beresford's picture, but of course they were not specially at-

tracted by it, nor were the attentions of Algy encouraged by his cousins.

But Mollie had to pay now for the fun she had indulged in on a previous occasion. Algy insisted on escorting her around the room, and Mrs. Hildreth was helpless in the hands of Sarah and her mother. But at all events there was some satisfaction in the fact that Mrs. John gave her all her "news." They were to sail for France next week, where the girls and the little boys were to be placed at school, while she and the captain took up their old lodgings in Paris. Algy had been promoted in his office, and Alexandra Villa was soon to be a thing of the past so far as the captain's family were concerned. Poor Mollie had to suffer a full quarter of an hour before Gladys came to her rescue with an invitation from Miss Bruce to take tea at Morpeth Lodge, whither they were all setting off.

Perhaps, in spite of all her desire to do well by her new relations, Gladys was not sorry to bid good-by then and there to Captain John's family; yet there was something genuinely kind in Mrs. Beresford's manner, and real regret in her voice as the farewells were spoken.

"We'll never forget you, my dear," she said, pressing Gladys's hands effusively, and looking at her with honest tears in her eyes. "Even if it isn't the saving of the captain it may be of the boys, poor little things, for many a night have I lain awake wondering 'ow ever I was to give them any sort of bringing up."

Gladys responded to all this with sufficient warmth, but

it was certainly a relief to join the other Beresfords and her two guardians, who were waiting at the head of the great staircase, and to feel that her lot in life was cast among people of their kind.

One thing occurred which further marked that day. Going down the stairs, Colonel Paget looked at his young companions and said, with a very quizzical expression,

"Did you see how very polite I was to Miss Sarah? Well, I couldn't resist one little joke. She congratulated me on my promotion, and asked me how I got it. 'Well,' said I, 'do you know I really believe it must have been because of my little gun, and the way I had of frightening the savages.' I wish you could have seen her look!"

The faces of the four young people were quite enough to see, and then the colonel had to admit his eavesdropping, and an hour later the story was recounted to Barbara and to her cousin Frank Bruce, who was up from school for the day.

Gladys, as she sat in the windowed recess of Mr. Bruce's drawing-room, looked about her, finding it hard to realize that she was actually the same girl who had come there for the first time eight months ago, and whose heart had lain so heavily weighted with loneliness in her breast. How changed everything seemed! Her position was now a clearly defined one; and while the little flutter of admiration and approval which followed her could not fail to be to a certain extent gratifying, yet it had not hurt the sweetness or unworldliness of her nature, and the root of her deepest content lay in the harmony which she had helped to establish. To see

Cousin Bert so well entertained, moving about in the English company with twinkling eyes and ready pleasantries, was delightful; and there were Winifred and Janey Beresford talking in an animated fashion with Lionel and Frank Bruce, although the latter had followed Gladys about loyally until she sent him off to renew his old acquaintance with the girls from Little Barnford.

Even the fact that Miss Dymond sternly disapproved of all the events of the past six weeks could not disturb the sweet content that seemed to pervade everything in Gladys Ferrol's little world. How hopeful the future looked! The faces and figures of the animated company in the drawing-room seemed to drift away, while other objects took their place, and Gladys saw herself quiet and happy in the house in Park Lane, with study and amusement enough to fill the period of her probation. And again another scene rose before her mind in which she saw herself at the Priory, whose gray walls must be blooming now with the vines rich in this verdant season. She could see the long avenue of oaks, terminating in the little iron gate and the rose-garden, and within the long, sombre-hued drawing-room with its many windows, and dominated by the portrait of Sir Guy. All the charm and suggestiveness of the house that she could call her own seemed to fill the young girl's mind; and then came a thought of the day when she had prayed so wildly that Arthur's life might be spared. Had not this and many another supplication from the young heart been answered? There was always a touch of something thoughtful in Gla-

dys's nature, in spite of her ready mirth, and just now, as she sat in the little window, the wistfulness of her young face surprised even Arthur Beresford as he approached her. But to Gladys it seemed only natural that in answer to her thoughts this living counterpart of Sir Guy should be coming towards her.

He had detached himself from the group in which Mary Bruce and the Hildreths were busily engaged talking of social questions of the day, and with constant references to Gladys Ferrol's new life. Somehow Arthur felt as if he knew his little cousin better than any of them, and their tone of satisfaction in her worldly advantages jarred upon him. Even Frank Bruce, who, it seemed to Arthur, had a great deal to say, could not understand the girl so well, but he was conscious that she had made a conquest of many things and people in the short time she had been among them.

"Are you looking around your kingdom, little Alexander?" said the boy, smiling.

Gladys roused herself from her abstraction and returned the sunshine of his look.

"I was just *glad*," she answered, simply; "it is so nice to see you all here, and I like everything so much! The last time I took tea here I was dreading going down to Miss Dymond's care, and now—only think of it, Arthur, to go *home*—really *home*—with my Fairy Godmother!"



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